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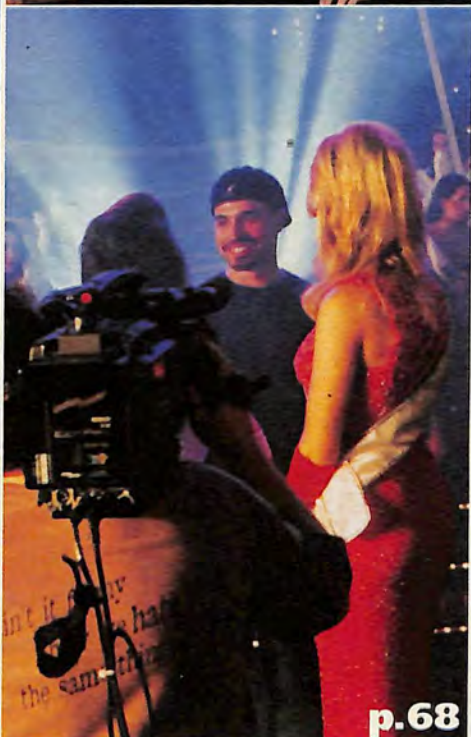
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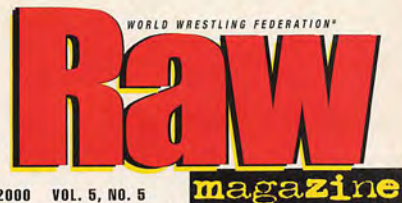
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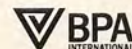
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**14**

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# RAGIN' ROSS



## Random thoughts & opinions from the Okie in the black hat who's got the best seat in the house!

By Jim Ross

Just think about it. Have you ever seen so much controversy surrounding the **World Wrestling Federation Championship**?

I'm not sure what the future holds for **Mick Foley**...but I know it's going to be good. Mick is a valuable and treasured asset on this talent roster, and being the ultra-talented performer he is, any new role he takes on will only be made better through his efforts. Even though his in-ring wrestling appearances are going to be drastically reduced, Mrs. Foley's baby boy will continue to be a huge part of World Wrestling Federation television and more. That's a very good thing.

The fire to return to the Federation burns mighty deep in the heart of the Texas Rattlesnake, but at what price? Obviously, **Stone Cold Steve Austin** will not—and cannot—return to

competition without a full medical clearance, a clean bill of health. However, it's obvious to me that Austin will be a marked man, and everyone he faces will certainly focus on his surgically repaired neck. In some sort of perverse mindset, the guy who silences the toughest S.O.B. in the Federation once and for all makes himself more marketable. Sick, but true.

**Crash "Elroy" Holly's** voice is tailor-made for animation. Crash needs his own cartoon.

Having been around longer than I like to admit, and observing lots of talented performers, I am still amazed by the popularity of **The Rock**. At 27, he overshadows, with this level of stardom at such a young age, anyone that I personally have ever witnessed. Only outside distractions can derail the "People's Champion"!

I'm waiting on the next non-Chyna lady to "break out." There are certainly significant talents among the females, but who's going to become the next one to cross into the "promised land"?

**Kurt Angle's** success in the World Wrestling Federation will motivate Federation officials to scout several outstanding amateur wrestlers in the immediate future. Angle is an extraordinary talent with maturity and a world-class work ethic. We should be so lucky to recruit and sign more

**Kurt Angle's** **Gerald Brisco** has been especially effective working with several college coaches and scouting several prospects. Brisco is a former amateur great at Oklahoma State University.

Usually when you say, "it's growing" and "**Rikishi Phatu**" in the same sentence, you are referring to his rather hefty backside. Not this time. It's his popularity, and it's growing big time. Hope we can say the same thing in six months. I'm pulling for this guy.

**Prince Albert** should be included in any list of top young World Wrestling Federation talents. Born Matt Bloom, this 6'7", 340-pounder is a college graduate from Pittsburgh, where he was a three-year starter on the O-line.





Matt has taught school, specializing in kids with learning disabilities. For my money, this guy's going to be around for a long time. But that name...

If I didn't know better, I would say that **Lita** is the long-lost sister the **Hardy** brothers never knew they had. What a flyer!

I'm looking forward to the **XFL** in 2001.

It's a tribute to the young Superstars on the Federation roster for taking up the slack with so many top hands on the injured list. Opportunity presents itself in a variety of forms at some very strange times. Because of that, young competitors awaiting their "big break" must never fail to be ready.

**Triple H** has become "The Game" in more ways than just in the ring. He's a big-time player who's his own man.

Over 30 young men and women are currently under developmental contracts with the Federation and are in Louisville (OVW), Memphis and Puerto Rico perfecting their skills. Some—a very few—might make it to *Raw Is War* or *SmackDown!* But most, unfortunately, will not. The competition to not only make, but to stay on, this roster has never been better or harder. This makes the product better...which should always be our goal.

Even though their non-wrestling performances have been very entertaining, let's not lose sight of how physically talented the **Acolytes** are. You gotta love two former football linemen who really enjoy contact. Tag champs?

Other guys seem to get more fanfare at times, but how can you not put **Kane** in the top five of all World Wrestling Federation Superstars these days? Barring injuries, the Big Red Machine will be on top of the mountain for years



to come. This youngster is tougher than you could ever imagine.

**Chris Benoit** is going to get very familiar with Federation gold before his career concludes. I'm not sure why certain things happen in our business; however, I am sure that the Federation is very fortunate to have signed Benoit, **Malenko**, **Saturn** and **Guerrero** so quickly. These guys can go.

We always look forward to performing live in England, and our May 6th event, **InsurreXtion**, in Earls Court in London is no exception. World Wrestling Federation fans who attend our live events throughout the UK are loved and fun-loving! The atmosphere at those events is really motivating!

**Steve Blackman** is one of the most

respected martial artists in North America. A truly bad man. Why, one time at baggage claim...

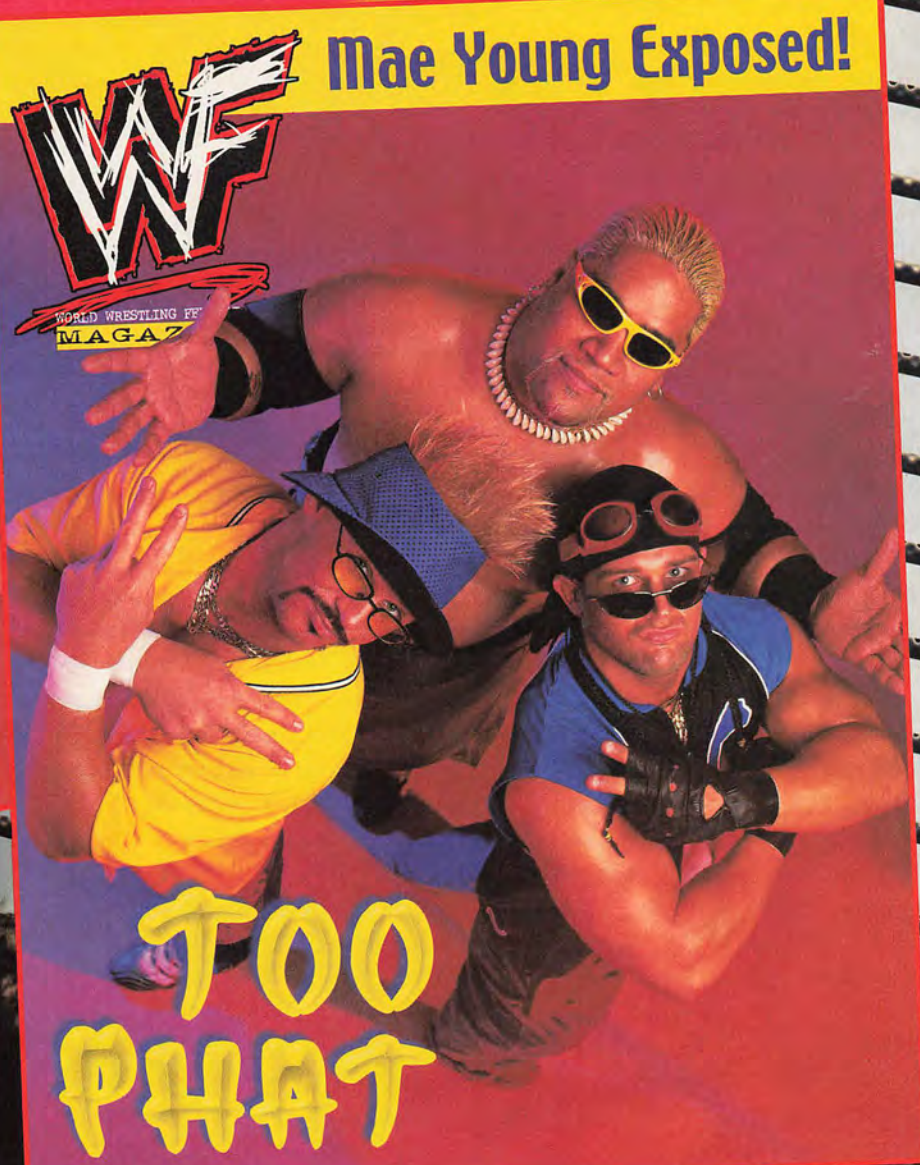
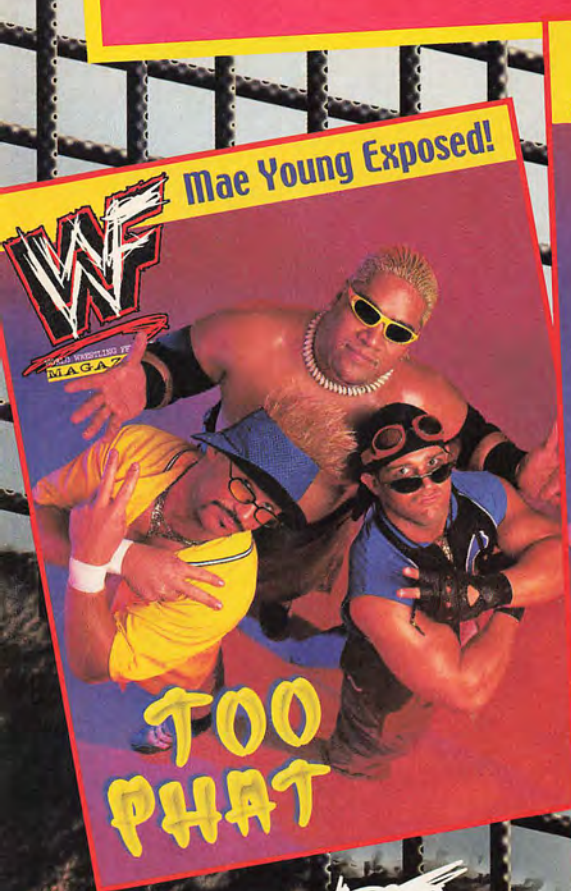
**Tazz** seems to be searching for something and has yet to get rolling in the World Wrestling Federation. Not to worry. This isn't unusual and actually shouldn't be perceived as a negative. It's just the way it is, and takes time and effort to work through. Tazz has been an overachiever all his life, and I have no doubt that he has the ability to be a player here. His style and look are unique; he's hungry and has legitimate toughness. One's own confidence can be quite an adversary at times.

Take care and thanks for all your support. See you next month!

J.R.



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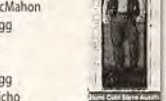
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# fan mail

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## Fine Chyna

Dear Editor,

I just finished reading the article on Chyna. It was awesome! I really enjoyed it. It made me respect and admire her even more. She is a role model to many, and the way that she has overcome the obstacles in her life is an inspiration to all. Chyna has proven to me that women can be successful if they are determined. I believe that this



will be Chyna's year. Keep up the good job. I hope you publish more articles like this one.

*Alicia Gutierrez*  
Chicago, IL

Dear Editor,

I want to start off by saying thank you for the remarkable article on Chyna in the March issue of RAW. It was one of the best articles I have read in a long time. I really admire Joanie, and it's nice to know that her life was less than perfect—just like mine. She has inspired me to just go for what I want and never give up. Keep up the good work and thanks once again for the great issue of RAW!

*Amanda Land*  
Porterville, CA

Dear Editor,

I have to comment on the amazing interview with Chyna in the March issue of RAW Magazine. First of all, I have been a huge Chyna fan since she arrived in the Federation, so it's great to finally hear what she has to say. I appreciate her honesty and the fact that she is willing to talk openly about her childhood. I know that I personally can relate to her hardships, as can a lot of other people. Chyna stated in her interview that she felt like a hypocrite telling people that they don't have to be a beauty queen to be successful, yet she changed her own looks. Personally, I believe that if changing your looks will give you more confidence and self-esteem, then by all means, go ahead and do it. Chyna's decision was a personal one, and if it gives her more confidence, then I am happy for her. I respect the fact that she is willing to share her feelings and experiences with her fans. I know she does not claim to be a role model, yet, to me, she is one. I see her as a very influential person who has become a tremendous success. Chyna has fought her way to the top, and she deserves every bit of success she attains. She is a positive role model, not only for women, but for all people who want to be successful in life. Chyna, enjoy your success, because you deserve it.

*Brenda Canzonerri*  
Brooklyn, NY



Dear Editor,

I just finished reading the March issue of *RAW Magazine* and would like to congratulate you on the fine job you did, especially on the Chyna article. People want more articles like that. Keep up the good work! Also, thanks for the great pictures of The Kat!

Robert Skinner  
Via E-mail

Dear Editor,

Thanks for the great article on the Ninth Wonder of the World, Chyna! She has come a long way from being a tomboy to becoming a Federation Superstar, a pioneer for women wrestlers, and a role model for girls everywhere. She accomplished a lot of firsts in 1999, topping it all off with winning the IC title at *No Mercy*, and she is only just beginning to scratch the surface. Joanie Laurer is one incredible woman who had the brawn, beauty and brains to make it in the World Wrestling Federation. The pictures were red hot too, with Chyna showing her muscles while wearing those sexy outfits—especially that black one. Maybe some day she'll be the first woman to win the Federation title. Chyna, you go girl!

Eric Isaac  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Editor,

Your article, "Survival of the Fittest" on Joanie Laurer, a.k.a. Chyna, was the best article that I have read in *RAW Magazine* in a long time. She is a role model for women who have had to struggle with unpopularity and have had to stare down sexism in our society. She's the best asset to the World Wrestling Federation. Keep doing what you're doing, Chyna. Thanks, *RAW Magazine*, for that kick-ass article.

Gina L. Starritt  
Fall River, WI

## Praise For The Posse

Dear Editor,

I am the biggest World Wrestling Federation fan ever, and I just got done with the March 2000 issue of *RAW*



*Magazine*. I enjoyed the article "Keeping It Real" about the Mean Street Posse and Shane McMahon. They were old buddies from childhood, playing football and going to the prom together. Now, they're together again in the Federation. Pete, Rodney and Shane are not just stuck-up, rich punks from the "mean streets of Greenwich." They've watched each other's back when there were problems. It's good that these three close friends are in the Federation. Also, I liked those pictures of Chyna. Keep it going.

Dennis Deleon  
Jamaica Plain, MA

## Rave Review

Dear Editor,

I just got done reading the February 2000 issue of *RAW Magazine*. I was so hooked on it that I read it three times. Honest. It was the greatest issue that's ever come out from the World Wrestling Federation. From the awesome interview with Mick Foley about his book, to Jerry Lawler's thoughts on Andy Kaufman, to the most honest story that you guys have ever done with the real couples of the Federation, all the way down to the dramatic story with D'Lo Brown talking about the accident with Droz. Great stuff! It's the most interesting issue I've ever read.

Eric Kerhin  
Brewster, OH



**"Hello, Ladies!"**

# Not All Fun and Dames

When It Comes to Breathtaking Photos, There's More Than Meets the Eye

You'd probably think a winter trip to the warm, sunny Caribbean with five gorgeous, bikini-clad women would be nothing but pure pleasure. Well...yes. But the amount of behind-the-scenes, hard work that went into the RAW

photo shoot featured in this month's issue would boggle the mind. Special thanks go out to the ladies and the crew for all their extra effort. To enjoy the fruits of their labor, turn to page 30, or check out the divas on [WF.com](http://www.fox.com).



# in the raw

**Mr. Ass on the Boob Tube?**

## Just for Laughs

**Chyna, Billy Gunn Hit the Sitcoms**

Fresh off a successful appearance on *Pacific Blue*, Chyna is set to return to the small screen with a recurring role on the NBC comedy *3rd Rock From the Sun*. Not to be outdone by his former DX-mate, Billy Gunn appeared on an episode of ABC's hit *Sabrina, the Teenage Witch*. Mr. Ass ends up in the ring with Sabrina herself—Fame-asser, anyone?



**It's not wise to mess with the Ninth Wonder of the World.**





## Wrestling or Horseplay?

Hot to Trot With Federation-Inspired Names

**His human** namesake was probably never disqualified in the ring, but sprinter Chief J Strongbow (right, by a nose) was DQ'd for bumping in March at Laurel Park, MD. Another Federation-named horse, trotter Andrethegiant (above), brought home his first victory of 2000 on February 21 at the Meadowlands Racetrack in New Jersey.



# an insider's view outside the ring...



An increasingly familiar site: Chyna in front of a camera.



"But, no one told me I was supposed to wear a tuxedo!"



**The Mood Is About to Change!**

# Wear the Shirt...If He Lets You!

With His Own Design on the Front,  
Tazz's T-Shirt Sells Like Wildfire

**Just as Tazz has** taken Federation fans by storm, so has his top-selling T-shirt. The unique logo on the front was conceived by Tazz himself. "I can't take credit for the whole thing," he says, "but the concept was my idea." The logo, refined by Tazz's tattoo artist, came from a rough sketch by Tazz. It was further stylized and given "flavor" by the Federation. The number 13 in the center also came from the mind of the Red Hook, NY native. "It's the unlucky number," Tazz says. "My whole character is based on not being about luck. I don't want to say people fear 13, but there's no 13 on elevators and no 13th floor and all that. I felt like it's a good gimmick. It fits my whole character, the whole 'F the World' attitude." Even with the ominous number, the T-shirt has been anything but unlucky for Tazz!



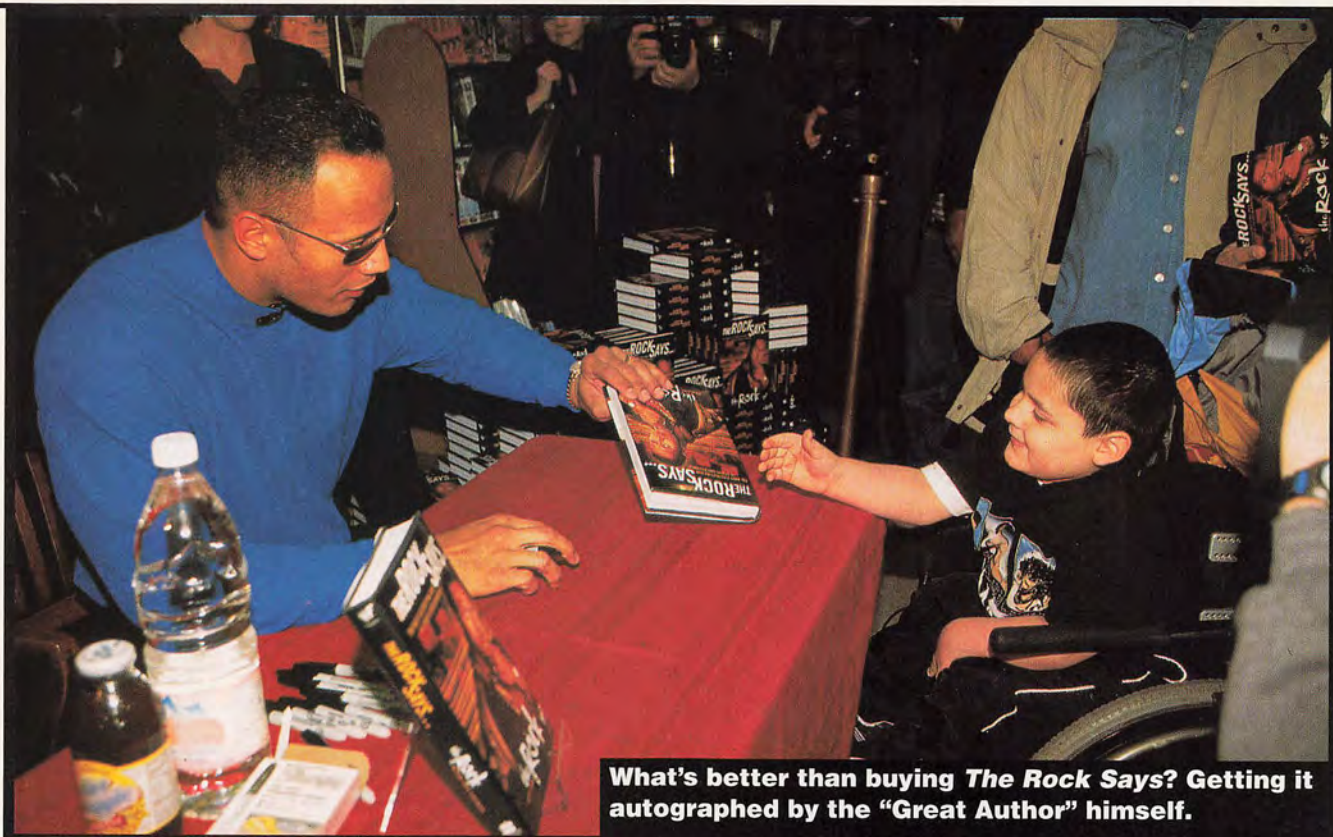
## Heating Up the Great White North

**Val Venis, Trish Stratus Right at Home for Canadian Music Week Awards Ceremony in Toronto**

Canadian-born Superstars Val Venis and Trish Stratus did a little home cooking recently. Val and Trish were presenters at the CMW Industry Awards, honoring the year's biggest and best performers of the Canadian music world. Val was escorted to the stage by some beauties who might make even the Godfather's hos jealous!







What's better than buying *The Rock Says*? Getting it autographed by the "Great Author" himself.

# Piledriving Publications!

## The Rock and Foley Soar—Now It's the Ladies' Turn

The Federation's unprecedented assault on the bestseller lists has only begun! Mick Foley's *Have A Nice Day!*, the first Federation book to reach the top of the *New York Times* bestseller list, is now in its 18th printing and spent 20 weeks in the top 10 on the *Times* list. *The Rock Says*, in its seventh printing (and still going strong), spent four weeks at the top of the charts and now has 625,000 copies in print. Coming up next from ReganBooks: Chyna's autobiography is due to hit the shelves in August and is sure to rival The Rock and Foley on the sales lists. And in what could end up being the most intriguing story of all, the Fabulous Moolah will put her seven-decade career onto paper in an autobiography scheduled for release in January 2001.





by keith elliot  
greenberg

# the rock's roots

Ata Johnson nervously shifts positions on the couch, her eyes riveted to the large-screen television in her Tampa living room. It's Monday night, and Ata's son, Dwayne—better known as The Rock—is positioned in center ring on *Raw Is War*, his head pitched back and a microphone affixed to his lips. "Look this Brahma bull in the eyes," The Rock is saying, "so this Brahma bull can take these horns, shine them up real nice..." Ata winces, bracing for what's coming. "...and stick them up your candy ass!"

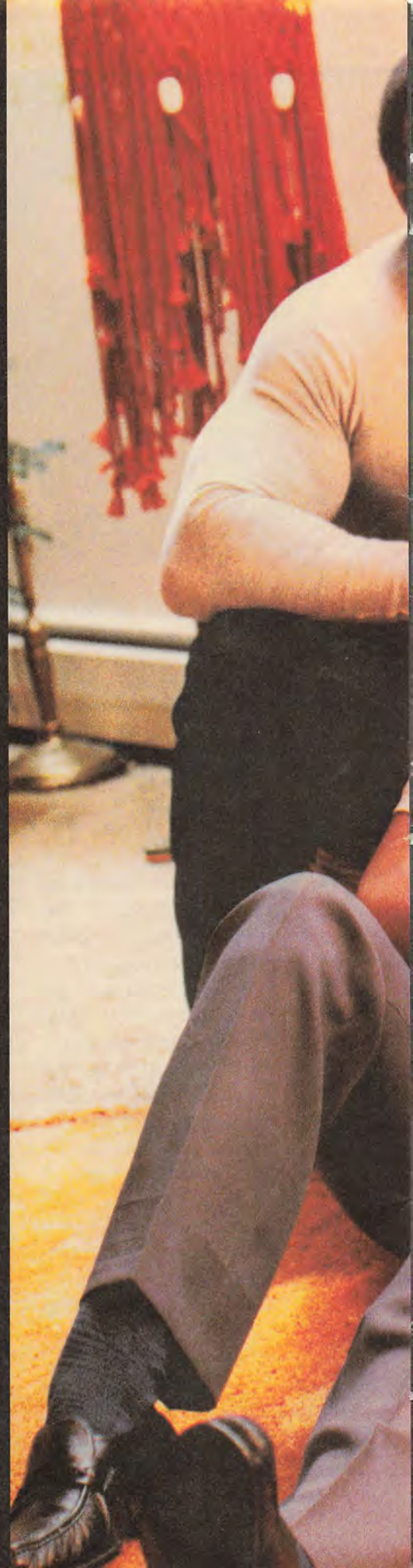
**Ata looks over** at her amused husband, former World Wrestling Federation tag-team titlist Rocky Johnson, then tells a visitor, "That's not really like Dwayne. I never heard him curse until he said..." she pauses, uncomfortable with what she's about to utter. "'A-S-S' on TV. I said, 'Dwayne, please don't say A-S-S on TV.' He said, 'Okay, Mom.' The next week, he came on and said, 'I'll stick this up your rectum.' I said, 'Oh, Dwayne, that's even worse.'"

Her squeamishness over her son's language notwithstanding, Ata is enormously proud of The Rock. And everyone in the family shares her enthusiasm. Rocky—whose 1983 championship conquest with Tony Atlas was a first for an African-American tag team—watches the audience on *Raw* almost as much as his son. Spotting a sign declaring, "The House The Rock Built," Johnson smiles, "You think The Rock's getting over?" Across the street, in her own house, Ata's mother, Lia Maivia—

widow of onetime World Wrestling Federation contender High Chief Peter Maivia, and promoter for the now-defunct Polynesian Pro Wrestling league in Hawaii—cries when she sees The Rock on TV. "In my heart," she explains, "I feel that Dwayne has made my husband alive again."

The Rock has reached a height in the wrestling business that would have been unattainable to either his father or grandfather. Part of his success is the result of timing; Dwayne Johnson happened to come of age just as the World Wrestling Federation got "Attitude." But The Rock's instincts—his ability to pull a great match out of an inferior or less experienced opponent, fire up a crowd by simply raising an eyebrow, and create catch phrases that kids utter in schoolyards and adults shout out in bar-rooms—is attributable to his pedigree. And to truly understand The Rock, one must first understand the people who shaped him.

**Rocky Johnson** came into the world as Wayde Douglas Bowles 55 years ago in Nova Scotia, the descendant of slaves who fled the plantations of the American South and formed a historic community in the remote safety of eastern Canada. Wayde's father cut logs,







worked in the coal mines, and poured brass and hot metal in a foundry. But when he died when Wayde was 13, the entire brood—there were ten children, including Rocky and a brother who'd later wrestle as Ricky Johnson—relocated to Toronto.

Pro wrestling was already part of the children's life. In Nova Scotia, they'd pay 50 cents when the matches rolled through, perhaps twice a year, cheering on the tag team of Babe Wingo and Lorraine Johnson. Now, they piled into Maple Leaf Gardens to watch "Nature Boy" Buddy Rogers (the first World Wrestling Federation Champion), technical wizard Lou Thesz, and Sweet Daddy Siki, a flamboyant man who sported a blond Afro in the conservative '50s. "To see these big, muscular guys do backflips and dropkicks," Rocky remembers, "I thought, 'They have to be the greatest athletes in the world.'"

But he had a long way to go before he joined their ranks. After winning trophies in swimming, diving and gymnastics, Wayde left high school to support his family, driving a fish truck for \$1.05 an hour. Six nights a week, he lifted weights and boxed at the local YMCA. One night during a snowstorm, he entered the recreation center and found only one other person there, a pro wrestler named Rocky Bolie, hitting the ropes and doing flips. "Boy, that looks interesting," Wayde said.

"Come on in, I'll show you some moves," Bolie offered.

These were the days when wrestlers were extremely defensive about their profession, and Bolie trapped the young man in a front facelock and chicken wing, just in case he had any doubts about the industry's authenticity. "He really cinched up to make a believer out of me," Johnson reminisces. "But, I wouldn't scream. I wouldn't quit. And from that night on, I never thought about anything else."

Wayde began learning the trade at Jack Wentworth's training school, taking the bus 45 minutes to Hamilton, Ontario. After three months, Wentworth called



the student into his office. Whipper Billy Watson, a two-time National Wrestling Alliance (NWA) world champion and a Canadian sports hero, was running for office, and needed a black protégé to help win the hearts of voters of African descent. “I was speechless,” Rocky says. “They put me on TV, and told me not to say anything. Watson would do all the talking.”

The newcomer came to the ring, looking sharp in a six-dollar terry-cloth robe, and was told to throw jabs and dance on his toes like another athlete by the name of Cassius Clay. Wayne Bowles no longer existed. The youngster was rechristened Rocky Johnson—a name he liked so much that he later had



it legally changed.

His first match lasted a minute: he defeated Firpo Zbyszko after an Irish whip, backdrop, three dropkicks and a sunset flip. Every subsequent bout had a similar outcome, and the old-timers were resentful—particularly Fred Atkins, a man with a busted nose and cauliflower ears who fancied himself a “shooter” (a wrestler who knows how to twist an opponent into submission when the action turns legit). “He’d stretch me every night,” says Rocky, “take me down with a front facelock, jam a foot in my mouth when he had me in a stepover toe-hold. Before he put me over [lost the match], he showed me who was boss.”

## To truly understand The Rock, one must first understand the people who shaped him.

Meanwhile, Watson’s efforts to launch a political career from the wrestling ring proved fruitless. He lost the election, and Rocky left Toronto, seeking fame in other territories.

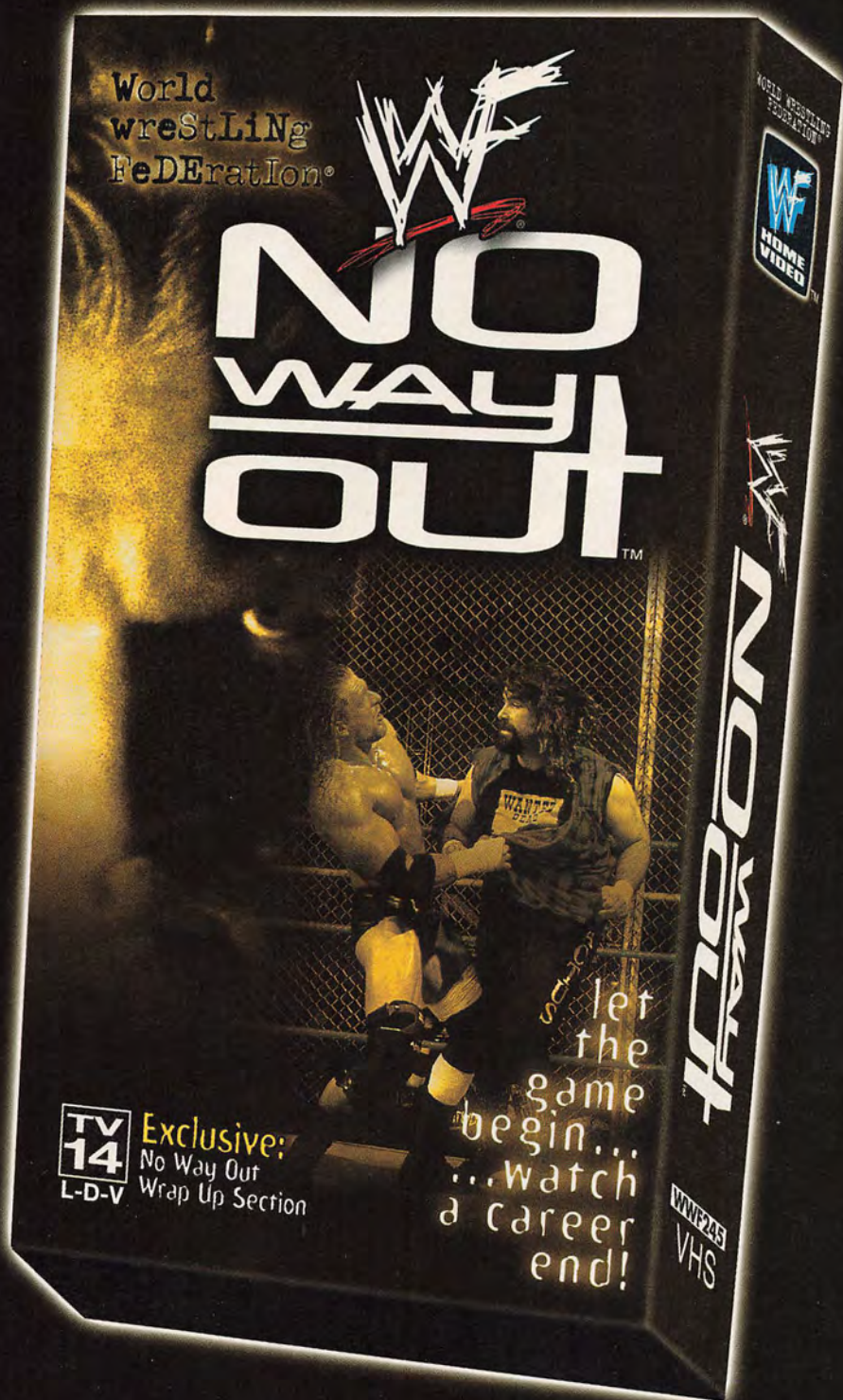
**Throughout his** tenure in the squared circle, Peter Maivia billed himself as a paramount high chief. More cynical mat-watchers generally assumed

that the title was a con created to make the Samoan athlete appear more exotic. But the reality was that Maivia had been bestowed this prestigious rank in his clan of extended relatives. And both his daughter, Ata, and grandson, Dwayne, recognized that there was something imperial about the long-haired grappler who covered his middle body in the tattoos of his homeland.

“My grandfather had a majestic aura



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## No Way Out of Rentin' it. April 25, 2000



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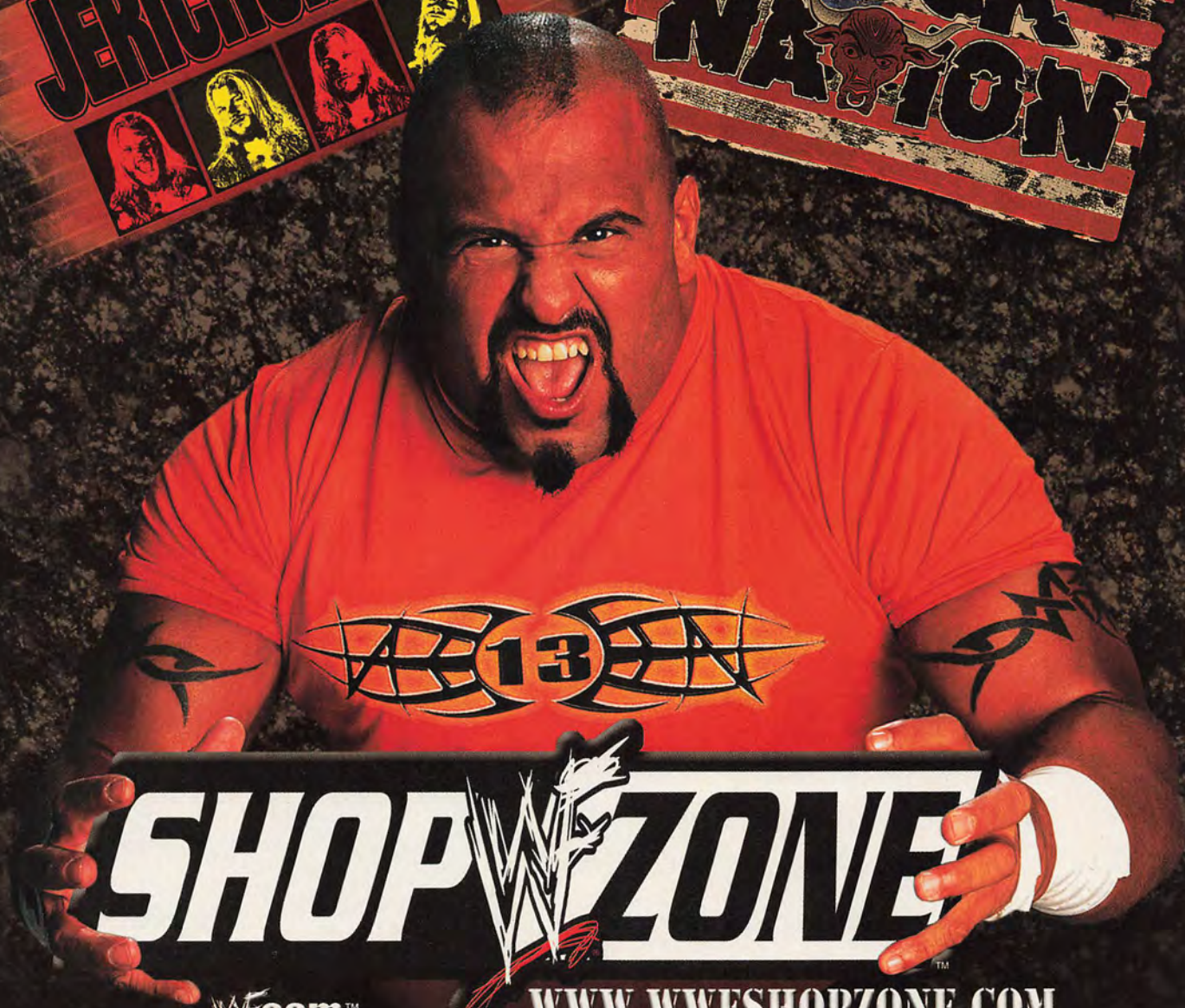


NEW SHIRTS! THE ROCK,  
JERICHO AND TAZ!

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to him," says The Rock. "It was almost mystical. He was a proud man, proud of his heritage, proud of the business that was his life."

Ata Johnson was Peter and Lia Maivia's only child. The Rock's mother was born in western Samoa, but the family moved to New Zealand when she was young. There, Peter worked in a lumber mill, and sang at Polynesian weddings for extra money. An ordained Congregationalist minister, the future wrestling star also preached on Sundays. Like The Rock, Maivia "had a very emotional way of speaking, where you had to listen," the 51-year-old Ata says. "Many years later, I remember an incident where he was wrestling Ray Stevens at the Cow Palace in San Francisco. My father was losing, and the Samoans in the audience began throwing chairs. My father took the microphone, said a few words in Samoan and very quickly calmed the situation down."

Maivia's entrance into the sport of kings bears two striking parallels to Rocky Johnson's story. The debut was triggered by a chance meeting at a YMCA—in Maivia's case, with wrestler



and promoter Steve Rickard—and was hastened by a will to appeal to a specific ethnic bloc: New Zealand's Samoans. Ata and Lia attended the matches, convinced that everything they saw in the ring was real.

"My father was very hush-hush," Ata recounts. "If he and Rickard were talking about the business and I walked into the room, there'd be silence. If they were practicing a move, the door would be sealed shut."

After experiencing moderate success, Maivia moved his family to England, where he appeared on cards for Dale Martin Promotions with Jackie "Mr. TV" Paolo, Mick McManus, and Shirley "Big Daddy" Crabtree, among others. "In those days, there was a lot of shooting between the wrestlers," Lia recalls. "They were very proud people, and they thought of themselves as real wrestlers. When a new guy would come in, they'd test him. You were expected to shoot



## The Rock's Family Album

(Top) High Chief Peter Maivia and his daughter Ata, who accompanied her father to the ring. Ata and Rocky Johnson's son Dwayne was surrounded by the business from birth. (Clockwise from left) Young Dwayne and his father have a posedown.

Dwayne wearing one of his dad's championship belts. Rocky and baby Dwayne cuddle up on the couch. Rocky Johnson early in his career. Johnson and Tony Atlas would later become the first African-American tag team to win the Federation tag belts.



back, and earn your respect. And my husband did.”

Through the years, Maivia had many shoots, both in the ring as well as in bars and hotels. But his most notorious encounter pitted him against English great Billy Robinson. At some point, the two men allegedly stopped exchanging holds, and tried maiming one another. The fight is said to have ended when the British legend’s eye was disconnected from its socket.

Lia could be just as feisty. One night in Birmingham, Maivia was working as a “heel” (villain) and the crowd began heckling him. England had not yet experienced a large-scale surge of Asian and Caribbean immigrants from its former colonies, and the largely white audience focused on the wrestler’s ancestry. When Lia heard one spectator shout, “Go back to your coconut tree, you savage,” she snapped, leaping into the ring and attacking her husband’s opponent with a high-heeled shoe. “Dad had to take her into the back and smarten her up,” Ata says. “But not me.” In fact, it wasn’t until Ata married Rocky that she was told about the predetermined nature of the matches.

Eventually, Maivia became a “baby-face” (good guy) and entered the ring playing the ukulele, while 15-year-old Ata accompanied him, dressed as a hula dancer. The teenager loved the excitement so much that she asked her father to train her for the squared circle. “He just said, ‘No, emphatically no. That’s it. Case closed,’” Ata relates. “To think about his daughter being thrown around on the mat or living life on the road, that was unacceptable.”

Peter Maivia first crossed paths with Rocky Johnson in San Francisco. Along with wrestling for promoter Roy Shires, Maivia was a Samoan community leader, presiding over meetings with other high chiefs, and staging at least one angry confrontation with police when fellow islanders accused them of discrimination. Johnson was now called Rocky “Soul Man” Johnson, and was teaming with muscular Earl “Mr.

Universe” Maynard, a black man from England whose accent seemed to perplex American fans. Aware that they were both being marketed as ethnic heroes, Maivia and Johnson felt drawn to one another. One night, they became so engrossed in conversation that Johnson missed his flight after the matches, and the Samoan invited him home.

“That was the first time I met Ata,” Rocky says. “I couldn’t stand her. She was so prissy. She thought she was Miss America.”

The feelings were mutual. “My father told my mother, ‘Give him something to spit in,’ and he sat there, spitting tobacco juice,” Ata recalls. “I thought it was disgusting.”

But the next time Johnson visited, the impressions softened. Lia was serving a traditional Samoan meal—raw snapper, a potato root called taro, green bananas, and *sapasui* (a Polynesian version of chop suey). Rocky mentioned that he was going to be touring Japan, and Ata promised to write him.

“I was maybe 20,” Ata says. “I wasn’t allowed to date yet. And my father was very protective. In Europe, I met Andre the Giant when he was just a teenager starting out, and my father kept him far away from me because he seemed too interested. But he felt comfortable about my friendship with Rocky because he was considered a family friend.”

Ata herself didn’t read any more into the relationship until Rocky returned from his tour, and Maivia took everyone out to a Samoan club. When Johnson danced with a young woman there, Ata felt pangs of jealousy. “Why don’t you dance with me?” she asked accusingly, realizing that this was more than a friendship.

Not long afterwards, Rocky became the first man Ata was allowed to date unchaperoned. But as the romance progressed, the Maivias became worried. Johnson’s ancestry didn’t concern them. Rocky’s profession was another story. “My father knew what wrestlers did on the road,” Ata says. “Even though Rocky



seemed like a great guy, my father knew there were other great guys who had different women in every city.”

But after a year of dating, the couple was not about to part. When Johnson received an offer to work for Eddie Graham’s Florida territory, Ata came with him, and they eloped. It was a while before Rocky spoke to his friend again. When he did, Maivia told him, “You took the apple of my eye, and I want you to treat her with the love and respect she deserves.”

In time, Rocky passed the Maivia family’s test—so much so that Peter arranged for his son-in-law to become an honorary chief in Samoa.

**In 1972,** when he was three weeks old, The Rock entered his first arena, sitting on his mother’s lap at the Cow Palace, as his father and grandfather wrestled the Japanese tandem of Masa Saito and Kinji Shibuya. “Mothers always want their sons to be great,” Ata reflects. “I felt there was greatness





## **“Mothers always want their sons to be great,” Ata says. “I felt there was greatness ahead of him.”**

ahead of him.”

The Maivias gave their only grandson a Samoan name, *Tuifeai*, or “Untamed King,” and became so attached to him that Ata grew concerned. “In our custom, it is perfectly fine to give a baby to a relative to raise,” she explains. “While Rocky and I were on the road, they asked to watch Dwayne for a week. Then, one week turned into six. Then, they wanted to keep him. Rocky and I had to fly to California to get him. We didn’t believe in that.”

Still, Dwayne remained close to his grandparents, and was soon sitting at ringside when Peter wrestled, shouting, “Go, Grandpa, go.” Remembers Lia, “He was a very young-looking grandpa, and he didn’t like all the good-looking girls hearing that. He’d say, ‘Lia, tell him to stop. It’s bad for business.’”

Today, The Rock reveals a secret he never told his family: “When I was in the arena, I really loved the heels—Superstar Graham, Killer Karl Kox, Don Muraco. Even at a young age, I could appreciate their edge, their freedom to say what they wanted to say. When I cut promos [did wrestling interviews] in the mirror, those were heel promos. I was Captain Lou Albano ripping into Cyndi Lauper, Roddy Piper holding court on *Piper’s Pit*.”

Perhaps Dwayne was able to cheer the men clotheslining and stomping his loved ones because, very early on, his mother informed him that the men in the ring weren’t actual enemies, but members of a fraternity that lived by its own shrouded codes. “I told him, ‘This is our living,’” Ata says. “‘It’s a good living. Everything we do in the ring, we

do to make the people outside the ring happy. So when your Dad looks like he’s losing, he’s not really losing. That’s the secret of our business. And we have to keep it a secret.’”

The philosophy led to countless fights. When kids asked Dwayne if wrestling was fake, he’d reply, “I can show you better than I can tell you.”

But, deep inside, the boy knew the real deal. And Ata wonders whether this awareness made him question virtually everything. “I’m not ashamed to say that I couldn’t win an argument with him,” Ata says. “He’d argue with us, and he’d argue with his teachers. If he was taking too long to make a point and the teacher would stop him, he’d say, ‘I’m not finished yet.’ It reminds me of when The Rock asks someone their name, and when they answer, he cuts them off, ‘It doesn’t matter what your name is.’”

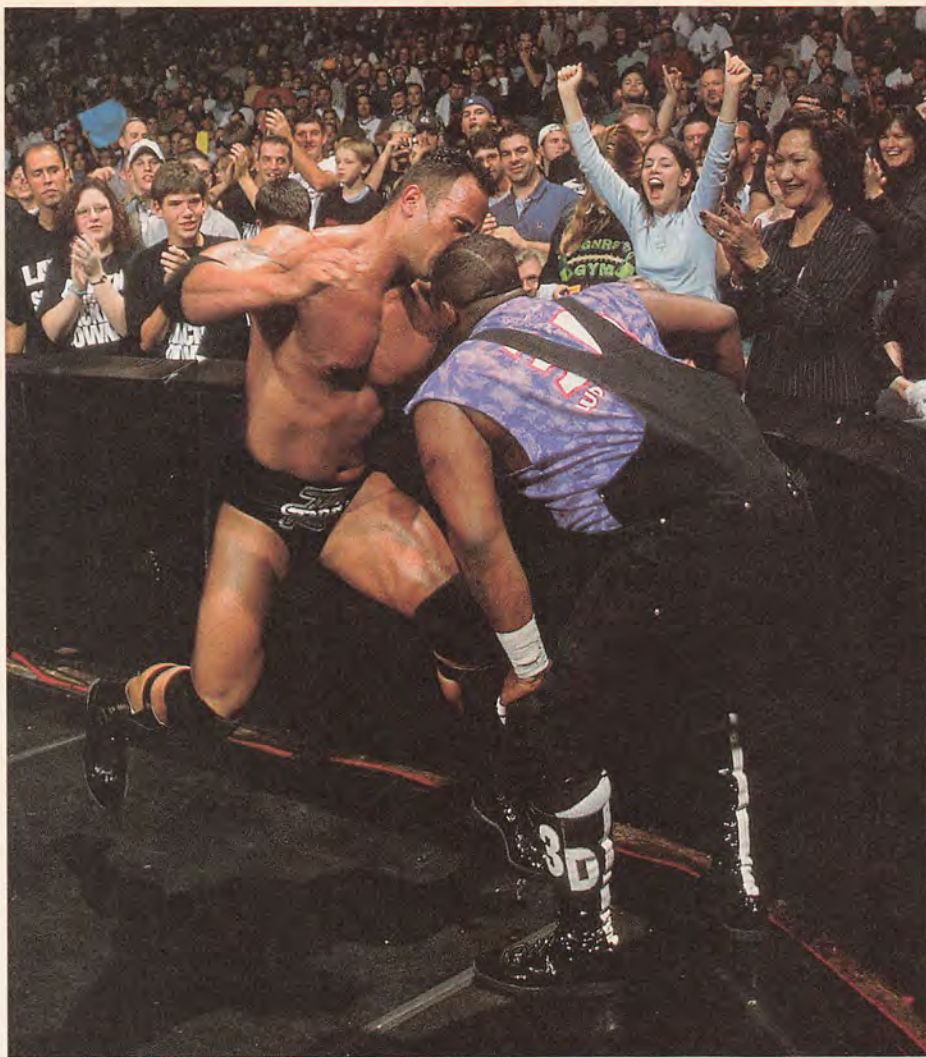
Strangely, even though Dwayne could act like a heel in the classroom, many of his instructors treated him like a babyface. “Whenever we had a birthday party,” claims Ata, “the teacher would be there.”

And he always had a sense of style. Says Ata, “While other kids were worried about their *Star Wars* sets, he was worried about his watch matching his ring. He’d come out of his room looking spiffy, the way The Rock comes through the curtain.”

As much as possible, Johnson took his wife and child on the road with him. “Other than Shane McMahon, Dwayne was the only kid in the dressing room,” Ata says. “The wrestlers spoke to him like he was a man. He would see a guy in the dressing room turn into another person in the ring. And he learned that life is not always the way it seems.”

So, while the Johnsons looked like the inspiring picture of domestic bliss, their collective presence was not always appreciated by wrestlers who didn’t like witnesses to their extramarital affairs. “They’d say, ‘You brought your wife again?’” Johnson says. “But I didn’t care. Without my family, I’d be nothing. If your family’s in one territory, and





## “Wrestling was in his blood,” Rocky Johnson says.

you’re on the other side of the world, it hurts. We saw a lot of good people and a lot of good marriages fail because the family wasn’t together.”

No one was earning a million-dollar salary in those days, and wrestlers cut costs by sharing rental cars and hotel rooms. Today, Rocky drives a truck, the result not of paydays squandered on bad investments and partying, but the reality that traveling with the family means extra expenses. “If I lived differently, I’d have a lot more money,” he concedes, “and I’d also be a lot less happy.”

**In 1982,** Maivia was diagnosed with liver cancer. As his grandfather spent his final days in a Hawaiian hospital, Dwayne saw wrestlers from

various stages of the High Chief’s career surrounding the man’s bed. One, Salvatore Bellomo, had traveled to Hawaii from the World Wrestling Federation’s base in the northeastern United States, and tended to Maivia’s every need. “He did everything for him,” Ata says. “And Dwayne understood that for all the problems in this business, the people in wrestling can be your family. I think it comes from the old-school thinking of ‘protecting the business.’ You’re all in on something together.”

Several years before his death, Maivia had purchased the wrestling promotion in Hawaii. He had no experience in this end of the business, but wanted to provide *pi’iga* (the Samoan word for wrestling) for other Polynesians. Now, as he neared death, he asked his wife

to continue the endeavor. “He told me his dream had not come true,” Lia says. “We did not have a successful promotion yet.”

This was not an easy task for a woman. “The boys wanted to do business with the boys,” Lia recalls. “When I asked them to do something, they’d say, ‘Well, I’ll do it out of respect for Peter.’ But it was my promotion now. They should be doing it for me.”

Lia brought in Lars Anderson, a wrestler of some renown, as a partner and booker—allowing him to plan feuds, victories and losses. Like many bookers, Anderson arranged for himself to win a title, the Polynesian championship. In The Rock’s book, *The Rock Says*, he remembers being backstage when Anderson refused Lia’s request to lose the belt at a memorial show for Peter Maivia. Infuriated, the 13-year-old boy screamed at the burly wrestler and threatened to pummel him. What Dwayne didn’t realize was that he was inflaming the tension that already existed between the Caucasian Anderson and the group’s largely Polynesian repertoire of wrestlers.

“The islander guys, they talked about ganging up on Lars and getting him outside the arena,” Lia says. “But I’d tell them, ‘This is my partner. We have differences, but that’s business. If he makes mistakes, let him make mistakes. That doesn’t mean he’s going to get beaten up.’”

Interestingly, the team of Lia and Anderson fared better with the promotion than Peter had alone. She arranged for a weekly television program to publicize upcoming events, and organized tours of Samoa, Tonga, and New Zealand. Working with promoters in both the United States and Japan, Lia was appointed vice president of the NWA, then a conglomeration of regional wrestling leagues, and had access to stars from different territories for big cards.

“The difference between my grandfather and my grandmother was that my grandfather relied heavily on local talent



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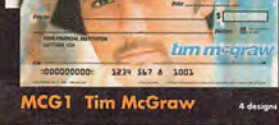
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**LOM1 Lorrie Morgan** 4 designs



**LOM1 Lorrie Morgan** 4 designs



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**9XSCSA Stone Cold™** 4 designs



**9XSCSA Stone Cold™** 4 designs



**9XSCSA Stone Cold™** 4 designs



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**9XSCSA Stone Cold™** 4 designs



**9XSCSA Stone Cold™** 4 designs



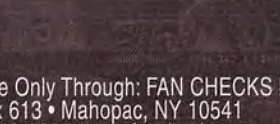
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**WWF1 Attitude™** 4 designs



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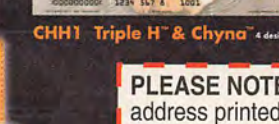
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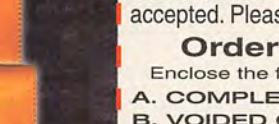
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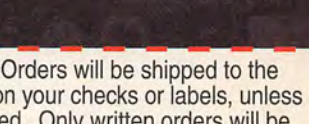
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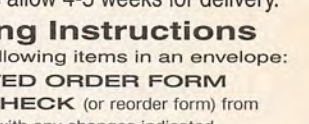
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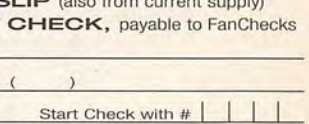
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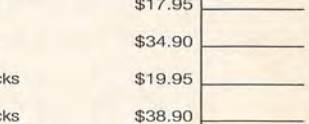
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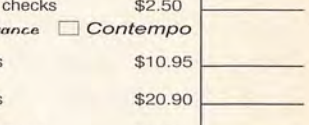
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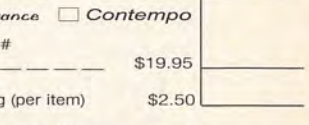
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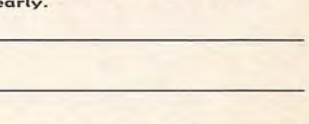
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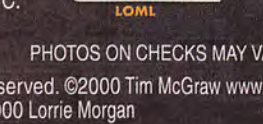
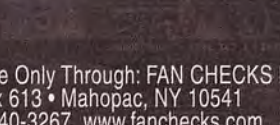


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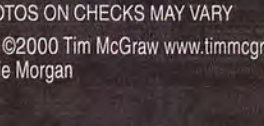
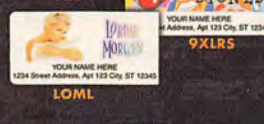


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to draw a house,” says The Rock, who, at age 12, worked as a ring announcer during a Samoan tour. “My grandmother had the vision to bring in the hottest superstars at that time, and let them build up the local talent. Through matches with stars like the Von Erich brothers and Ric Flair, the local guys gained credibility with the fans.”

The promotion’s finest moment came in 1985, when Lia staged a spectacular at Aloha Stadium. The NWA and the World Wrestling Federation were at war at the time, but Vince McMahon allowed his wrestlers to appear on the card, alongside the rival organization’s stars. The good faith was the result of the relationship Lia had enjoyed with McMahon’s father. “Just before he died, Vince McMahon, Sr. came to visit me with his wife,” Lia says. “He knew he was sick, and he told me it was the last vacation they were going to have in Hawaii. We spoke about how I wanted to make Peter’s dream come true, and he told me, ‘God bless you. Don’t give up.’ His son understood the way his father felt, and respected it.”

The result was one of the dream cards of the 1980s, featuring a collection of talent from the World Wrestling Federation, NWA, and the fabled Antonio Inoki’s New Japan promotion. Among the names featured on the show: Andre the Giant, Jimmy “Superfly” Snuka, Flair, Nikita Koloff, Dick Murdoch, Adrian Adonis, Inoki, Bruiser Brody, Dusty Rhodes, Magnum T.A., and Tatsumi Fujinami—along with Farmer Boy Ipo, Superfly Tui, Mighty Milo, Siva Afi and other Polynesian Pro Wrestling regulars.

Rocky Johnson also appeared at the event, teaming with his brother Ricky. Dwayne also worked at Aloha Stadium, selling t-shirts and programs. “He got paid that night,” Ata says.

**On Raw,** The Rock is strutting down the runway in a leopard-print jacket, prompting his father to stiffen his shoulders on the couch. “Look at that

jacket,” he grins. “He won’t give me any of his old clothes.”

Even when Dwayne was making headlines as a defensive lineman at the University of Miami, Rocky believed that his son would find his way back to the family business. “Wrestling was in his blood,” Johnson says. “His mother thought he’d end up in the NFL. But I looked at football as giving him the conditioning he’d need when he became a wrestler.”

And Rocky was delighted to coach his son on the intricacies of the mat wars. “The hardest thing for me to teach him was the difference between selling [dramatically reacting to his opponent’s blows] and dying,” Johnson says. “He’d just lay there. I’d say, ‘Grab your head. Grab your stomach. Sell.’”

Not surprisingly, the headstrong Rocky and his father clashed during training. “He thought he was ready [to make his debut] as soon as he could do a backflip from the top rope and land on his feet,” Rocky recalls. “I said, ‘A lot of guys can do that. But you have to keep at it, learn how to respond to the fans, develop crowd psychology, have a reason for everything you do.’ He’d tell my wife, ‘Dad’s holding me back.’ But you have to develop something special, so you don’t get lost in the shuffle. That’s what makes The Rock stand out from so many other guys.”

On the day she received a copy of *The Rock Says*, Lia Maivia touched the book to her heart, and said, “Grandpa.” Staring into the smug face of her grandson on the jacket cover, Lia saw the countenance of her late husband, looking regal in his Samoan headdress, flashing the smile that fans were told could light up an island. In the High Chief’s wildest thoughts, he never could have envisioned the business as it exists today, with pay-per-view, licensing, wrestlers openly talking about their “characters” and “storylines”—and his grandson’s memoirs becoming a *New York Times* bestseller.

Dwayne tried honoring his family

when he first entered the World Wrestling Federation, calling himself Rocky Maivia—after his father and grandfather. But even Lia conceded that the routine didn’t work. He needed to get edgy, more like the way Dwayne Johnson was in real life. His membership in a group of inner-city bad boys called the Nation of Domination was a step in the right direction. But, according to his grandmother, Dwayne’s feud with Stone Cold Steve Austin propelled The Rock to a level few have ever experienced in the business. “It was special,” she says. “It brought out something in him.”

At 72, Lia admits that her memory sometimes evades her. But when she dreams of the past, or looks at the present, she feels happy. The past is filled with thoughts of her husband’s storied victory over Harley Race in New Zealand, nights at the Cow Palace with Ray Stevens, Pat Patterson and Pepper Gomez, and the 1985 Aloha Stadium show. And the present is personified by the life-size cutout of The Rock that stands apart from the rest of the family heirlooms in Ata Johnson’s kitchen.

But on those rare occasions when The Rock drops a match, his grandmother’s equilibrium is thrown off course. Remembering that in Polynesian Pro Wrestling Peter Maivia never ended a card with his shoulders on the canvas and eyes looking up at the arena lights, Lia phones her daughter and sharply asks, “Why did he have to lose?”

Ata finds the questioning comical. “She’s old school,” says The Rock’s mother, with her own mother listening close by. “Good thing she’s not booking for the World Wrestling Federation. Dwayne wouldn’t be selling for anybody.”

“I’m retired,” Lia responds. But her voice is less than resolute. And a visitor is left to wonder if, once—just once—she’d like to return to the industry that’s defined her family, strut through the World Wrestling Federation’s dressing room, nudge Vince McMahon out of the way, and book her grandson’s finish. ■



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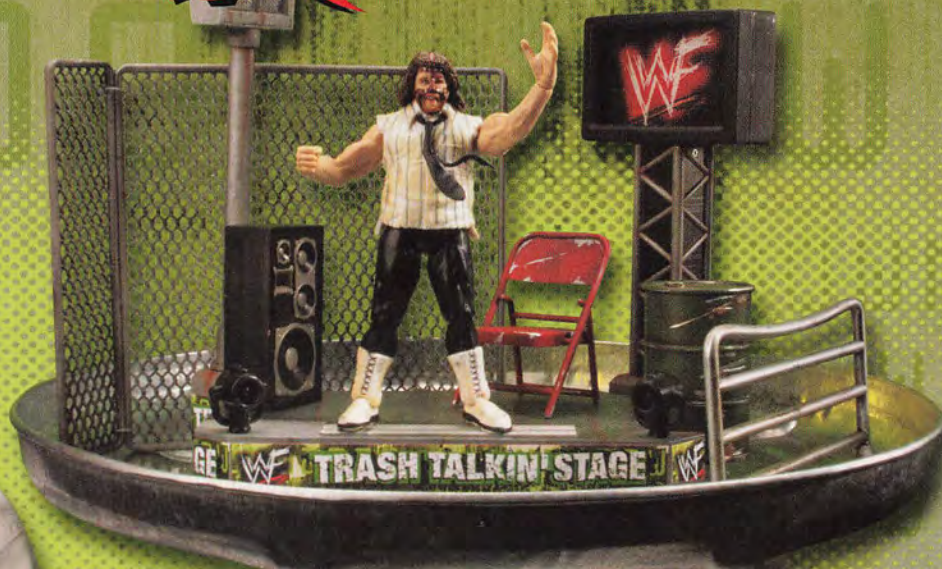
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Of all the things I've lost,  
I think I miss my  
mind the most!



WORLD WRESTLING FEDERATION®



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WORLD WRESTLING FEDERATION®



**Not since** the Rockers in the late '80s have two sports-entertainers induced such frenzy amongst adolescent female fans. From tons of fan mail to near-stalking at the hotels the Hardy Boyz stay in, the brothers are The Beatles of sports-entertainment. Did Matt and Jeff Hardy ever imagine that along with success in the World Wrestling Federation, they would be the objects of such affection?

"I didn't really expect this kind of response from the female fans with the way our image was," Matt told *RAW Magazine*. "When we first got with Michael [Hayes], we were real dark and were the

**by Laura**

"And the clothes we wear are considered pretty cool—it's what all the young people wear out there."

But it's more than their clothes—or fine bodies and good looks, for that matter—that evoke such an impassioned response from the young female fans. It's their attitude. Matt and Jeff Hardy certainly don't personify the "All-American Boy"

jock in 3rd-period history class.

The question is: Just how far will these girls go to get the Hardy Boyz' attention?

# life's a scream

**Move over Backstreet Boys—the Hardy Boyz are here and scores of feverish female fans won't let anyone forget it.**

furthest thing from being pretty and prim. I figured some of the girls would probably dig us because we're young and we have bodies that are in good shape. But we didn't expect girls to react to us like we're The Backstreet Boys!"

"Our image is somewhat young and hip now," Jeff said.

image. No, there's an element of danger to them. With their long locks and daring athleticism, they defy the image of mainstream America—and that's what makes them so attractive to young girls. The Hardy Boyz sure beat the pimple-faced boy next door, not to mention the super-perfect

"One thing that sucks for Jeff and me is that *Matt and Jeff Hardy* are our real names," Matt said. "We've had girls call our hotel rooms at all hours of the night, and we've even been on the road and have had girls waiting to follow us when we leave the arena—that's happened a couple times.









As a matter of fact, when we were in Texas at the last TV [taping] there were some girls who followed us for about nine miles."

"Yeah, it's pretty insane when stuff like that happens," Jeff said. "Especially when you check into your hotel room and there's three messages from people you don't know—young ladies saying 'Hey, if you want to get together and have some fun!'"

"I say to myself, 'Wait a minute—how did you know we were staying here?' I guess when we're in a town and they know Matt and Jeff Hardy are our real names, they'll just call around to all the hotels to find out where we're booked."

But perhaps the area where one can gauge just how much of an impact the Hardy Boyz have had on young girls' hearts is their fan mail. At *RAW* and *World Wrestling Federation Magazine*, one out of every four letters is either addressed to Matt and Jeff Hardy—or discusses them. Girls write in pouring their hearts out, sharing their almost frantic feelings of love for one—or both—brothers, or they're writing to request tuxedo and chocolate-pudding matches involving the two! The Hardy Boyz have had the same kind of responses at their website ([www.mattandjeffhardy.com](http://www.mattandjeffhardy.com)).

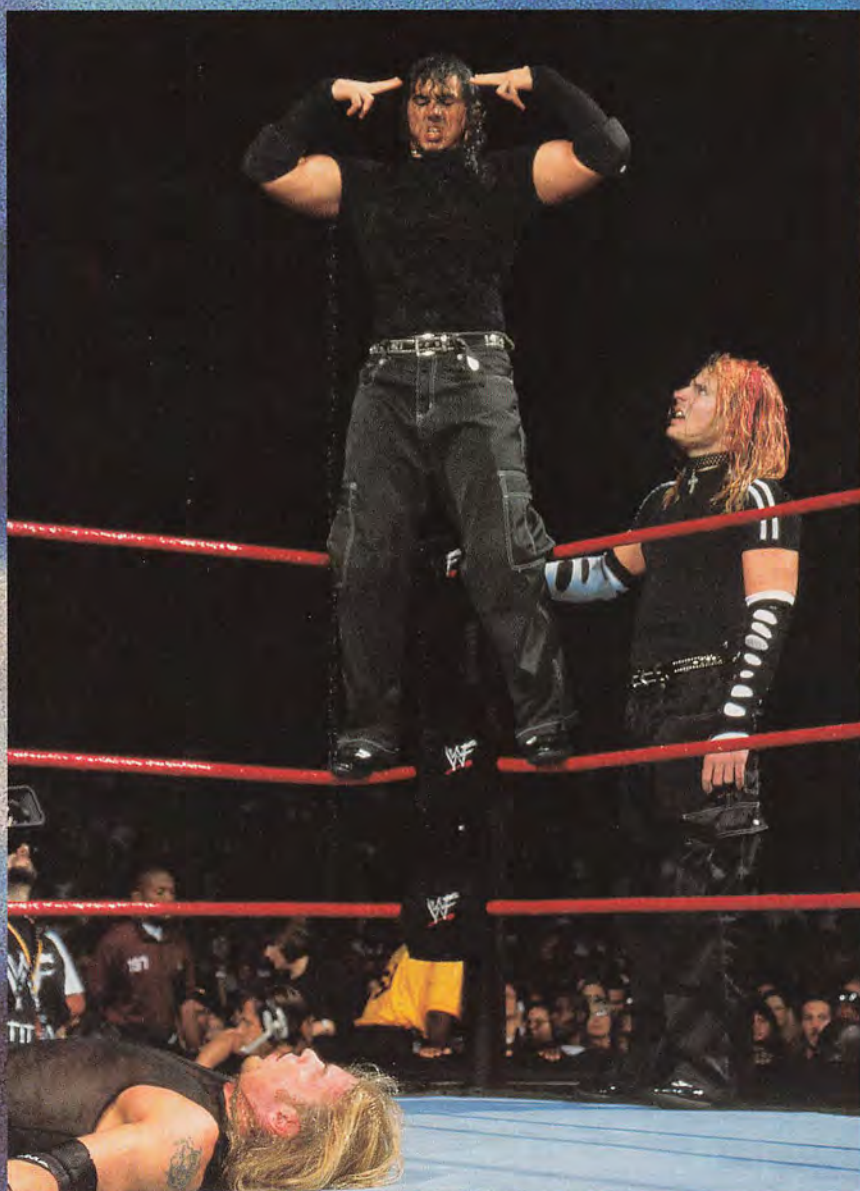
"We get a lot of poetry," Matt said. "And now that it's springtime, we're

getting a ton of girls writing us, asking us if we'll go to the prom with them!"

At their website, Jeff's personal page includes poetry he's written himself. After reading it, it's no wonder the girls love these guys. Contrary to their "bad boy" image, the Hardys have a sensitive side—a fact that makes these brothers seem all the more approachable.

While it must be flattering, one has to wonder if it ever gets tiring being the object of such adoration.

"You know, I'm glad that they're supportive and they'll pay money to see us and buy our stuff, and that they're behind us 100%," Matt said. "And it's also really, really flattering





whenever we do appearances.

"You feel bad for them because there's a lot of times that girls come through and they actually get to meet us and speak to us and shake our hands, and they'll start crying and shaking and go through that whole deal, which you know is just so hard," Matt added.

"You just want to grab them and hug them to make them feel comfortable. But you know whenever that happens it's just amazing that somebody can be that dedicated to you without ever actually meeting you."

"It's still so hard to swallow when you take part in a scene like that," Jeff

agreed. "I mean, I'll sit here and watch TV and look up to certain rock-'n'-roll stars—and I know that if I were to see them in real life I'd be freaking out and stuff, too. But then to think that people look at me in that light, it's just so strange and it all happened so fast. But hey, it's wonderful." ■





**Come on in,  
the water's fine...**

# THE KAT

---

**Who says Kats don't like water?**



**Photography by:** Tom Buchanan, Rich Freeda and David McLain.

**Makeup Coordinator/Artist:** Jill Clark, **Makeup Artist:** Janet Ventriglia













Whether on the beach or in the bungalow, this little kitten knows how to purr.



# IVORY

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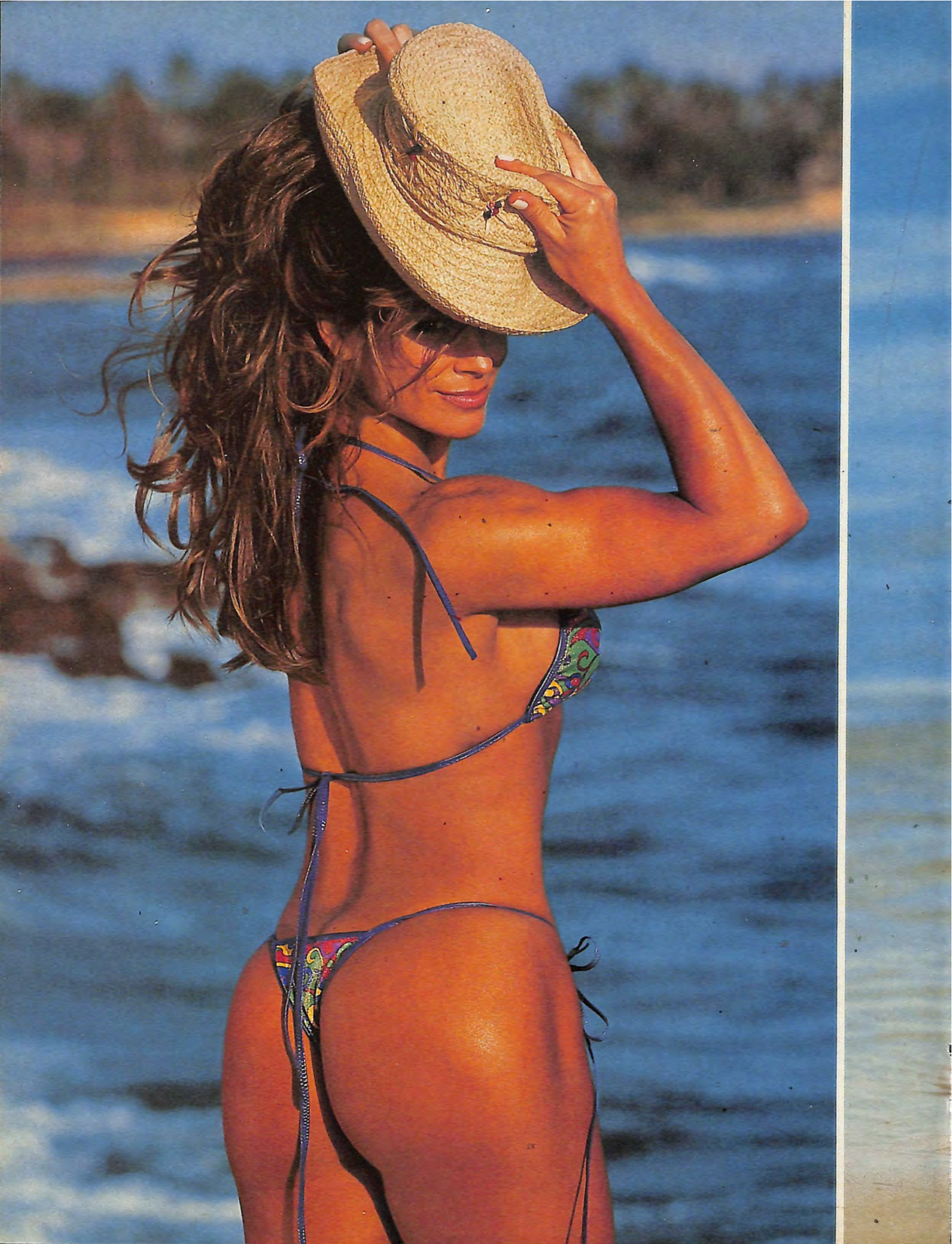
Do mermaids really  
swim this close to shore?















You can bet  
pirates would  
still be around  
if they knew this  
treasure was  
on the beach.



# TORI

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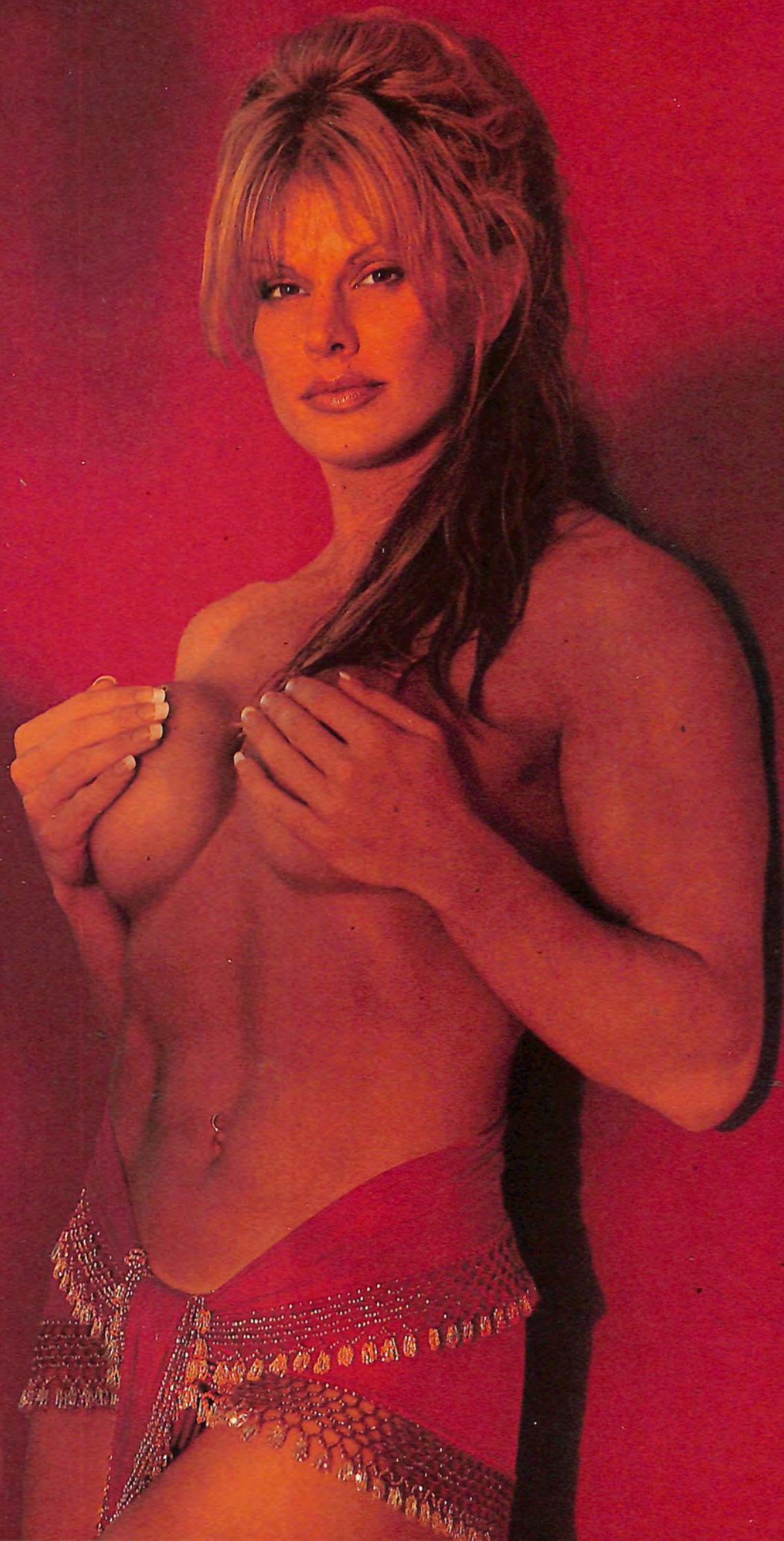
Wouldn't you like to wake up  
to this view every morning?















Our woman of  
mystery is right  
at home in this  
exotic locale.



# TERRI

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Isn't Flag Day in June?















The average  
temperature in  
the Caribbean is  
a balmy 88°...  
wanna bet  
Terri set some  
new records?



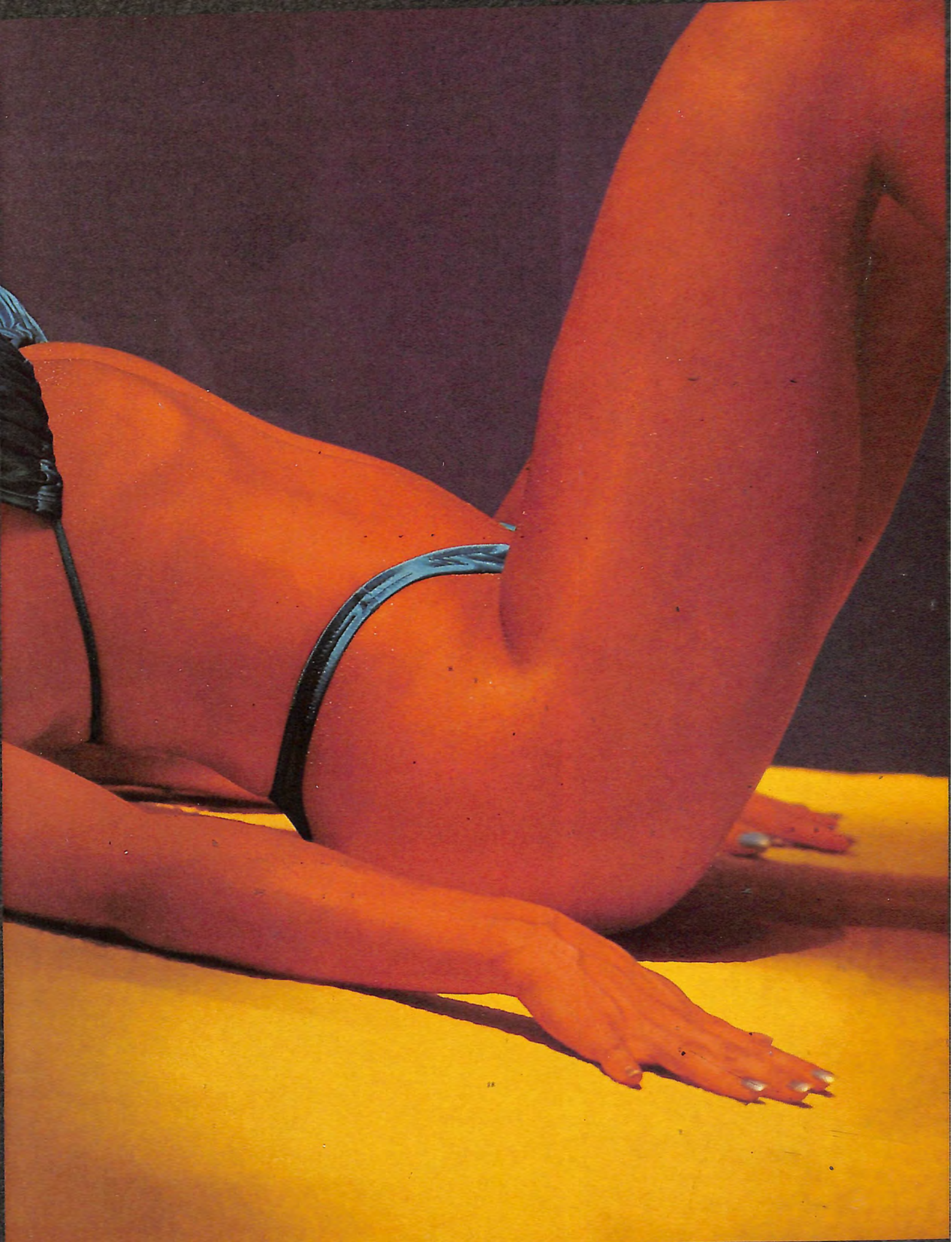


# TRISH

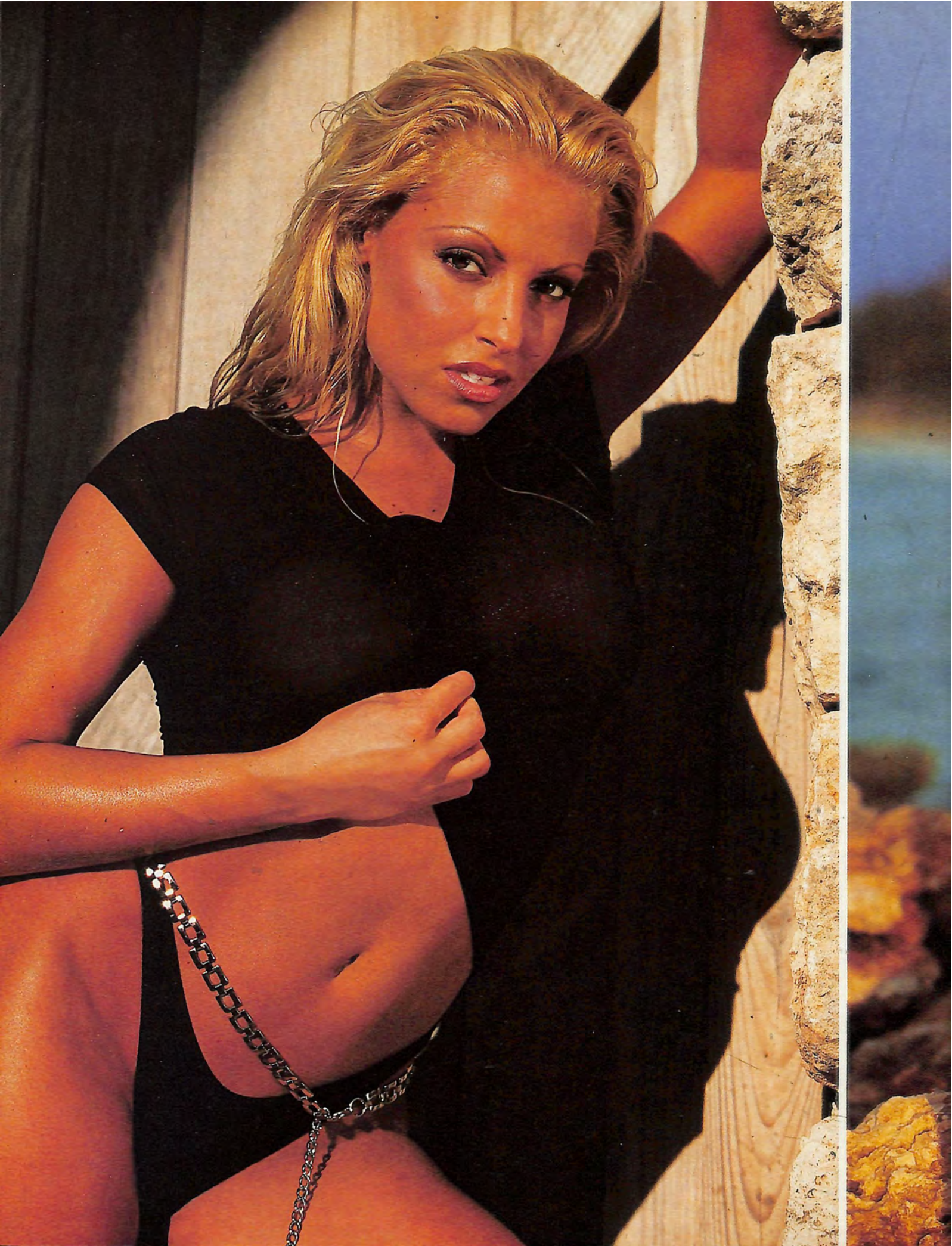
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Who knew the Canadian  
wilderness could be so hot?













This newcomer is sure to heat up the ring as much as she's heating up the beach.



# The Man WHO

Even from his earliest days in Campobasso—60 miles from Naples—**DeNucci** had a sense that wrestling would define his life.

“I met Mickey in Long Island,” Dominic DeNucci begins, remembering the time in 1985 when he first crossed paths with the ambitious college student who’d later galvanize crowds as Cactus Jack, Dude Love and Mankind.

Mick Foley was willing to do anything to get into the business. And so, on this night, he was putting up the ring for New York independent promoter Tommy Dee. DeNucci was a former World Wrestling Federation Tag Team Champion who, in the twilight of his career, was locking up in small gymnasiums, and training wrestlers on the side. When Foley mentioned that he hoped to make his living in the squared circle, DeNucci invited him to step through the ropes while the building was empty.

“He didn’t know nothing,” DeNucci recounts in his thick Italian accent. “He didn’t even know how to tie his shoes. I slammed him, and he got up. I slammed him again. He got up again. I shoved his face in the mat...I don’t know how many times...and every time, he got up. He was bleeding from his nose and everything, but nothing bothered him.”

DeNucci had seen former football players, bodybuilders and amateur wrestlers quit as soon as he’d tightened up a headlock. But Foley wasn’t going anywhere. Some would have written off the aspirant as a foolhardy masochist. But DeNucci drew another conclusion: “I could tell he belonged in this business.”

Today, Foley’s accomplishments in the ring have far outshone those of his trainer. But, the former World Wrestling Federation Heavyweight Champion emphasizes, it was DeNucci who initially molded him. “I’m not saying I wouldn’t have become a wrestler without Dominic,” Foley says. “But I wouldn’t have been a success without Dominic. The key to my success was personal attention.

by He really did care.”

**Keith Elliot  
Greenberg**

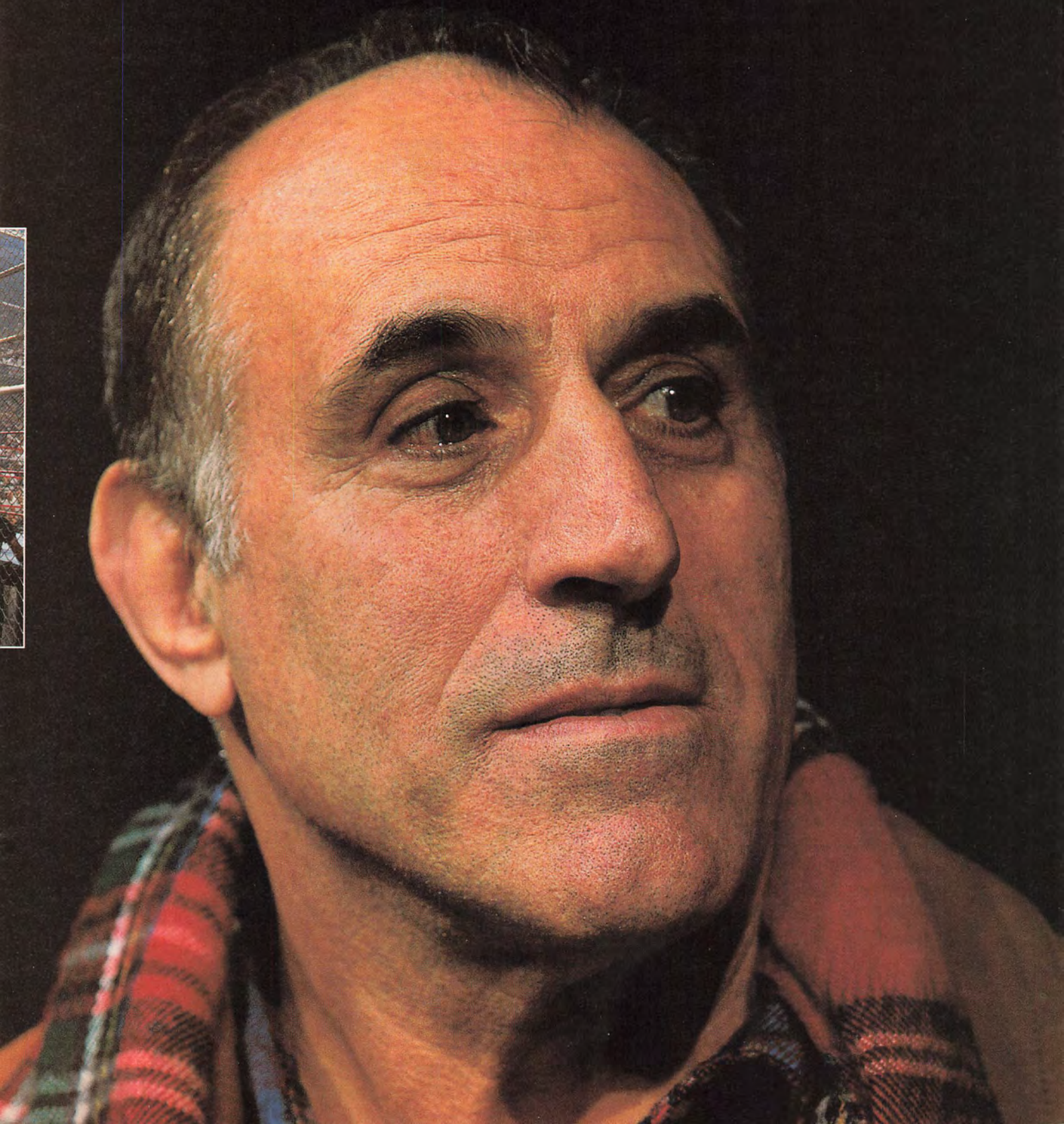
For DeNucci, who trains his disciples in Freedom, Pennsylvania, Foley’s achievements are as good as his own. While others of his generation watch *Raw Is War* from their living rooms and moan about the high salaries of today’s Superstars, DeNucci still feels like part of the game. “Wrestling is so beautiful to teach,” he says, “when you have a student like this.”

Even from his earliest days in Campobasso—60 miles from Naples—DeNucci had a sense that wrestling would define his life. At school, he thrilled to catch-as-





# D shaped FOLEY





catch-can and Greco-Roman matches. But he can't articulate exactly what drew him to the sport of kings. "You ask me why I like wrestling," he answers, sounding a bit agitated. "I don't know why. I like it."

At age 20, he relocated to Montreal, took up hockey, and, several nights a week, wrestled at a recreation center in the city's French-speaking eastern sector. His goal was the 1956 Olympics. But, while he won a number of tournaments, DeNucci lacked the resources to travel and train properly. Eventually, he became acquainted with Tony Lanza, a professional wrestling photographer who also ran a training school in his basement.

Within six months, DeNucci was ready for his debut, wrestling under a mask as the Red Demon, and teaming with the legendary Killer Kowalski. By the early '60s, he'd discarded the hood, and promoter Eddie Quinn was marketing him to Montreal's sizable Italian population as an ethnic hero.

North America contained dozens of regional promotions, and DeNucci began working the various circuits, spending time in Calgary, San Francisco and Los Angeles, and even traveling to Australia and Japan for matches. In Detroit, he teamed with the original Dino Bravo—as opposed to Adolfo Brescino, the strongman who'd later assume the same identity and join Dominic in toppling Professor Toru Tanaka and Mr. Fuji for the Federation's Tag Team belts in 1978.

"This guy, his name was really Dino Bravo," DeNucci recalls. "He was the real one. He was 6'7", came from northern Italy, and looked like a movie actor. But then he got married, and he didn't want to move all over the place, the way the wrestlers do. So you never hear about this Dino Bravo."

In 1968, Vincent J. McMahon—father of current World Wrestling Federation head Vincent K. McMahon—invited DeNucci to what was then called the World Wide Wrestling Federation (WWWF).

"I went to Vince McMahon on November 26, 1968," DeNucci says. "I remember all the dates—30 years ago, I remember."

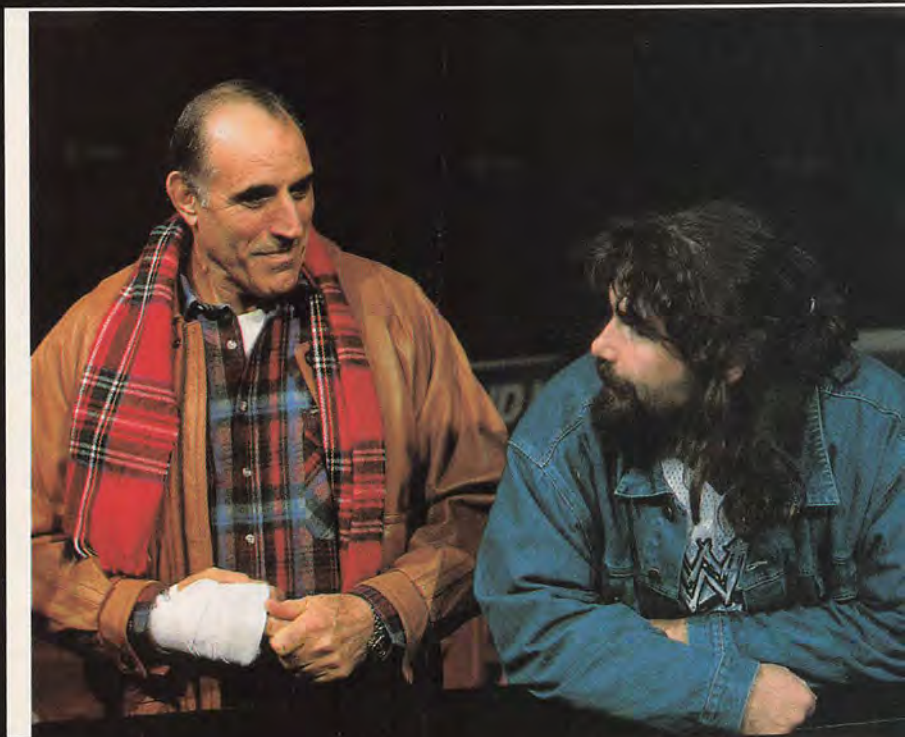
DeNucci fit nicely in the WWWF. There was another Italian superstar headlining the cards, Bruno Sammartino, the powerhouse who'd made his name with the New York fans by hoisting up and slamming 600-plus pound Haystacks Calhoun in Madison Square Garden, and, a short time later, vanquishing "Nature Boy" Buddy Rogers to become the WWWF kingpin. But the elder McMahon was not as strict about "protecting the business" as other promoters Dominic had known: "In San Francisco, God knows, a babyface (fan favorite) could not stay in the same hotel if a heel (villain) was staying there. In New York, nobody cared. And now, forget now—now, the babyface and the heels, they sleep together."

Still, DeNucci loved the territory. He

relocated to the Pittsburgh area, battled legends like Kowalski and Ivan Koloff, and—three years before his reign with the second Dino Bravo—won the WWWF Tag Team titles with Puerto Rican star Victor Rivera. When Rivera bailed out to work for a rival promoter, the organization chose to appeal to another ethnic bloc by bestowing the Latino's share of the championship to Irish Pat Barrett. After DeNucci stirred up the Italians, Barrett's crowd was delighted when he chased the heels around the ring with a shillelagh [the thick-handled walking stick Irish rebels used to yank British soldiers off their horses during the 1916 uprising].

The fun couldn't last forever. In 1983, just as the Hulk Hogan era was about to begin, DeNucci parted ways with the company. "They wanted young guys," he claims. "There was not a place for me there."

He continued wrestling until 1987—



**"I wouldn't have been a success without Dominic. The key to my success was personal attention. He really did care."**



making sporadic comebacks afterwards—but, along the way, founded his training school. Even before he encountered Foley, DeNucci cultivated the talents of a local boy named Troy Martin, who would later be known as Shane Douglas in Extreme Championship Wrestling (ECW) and World Championship Wrestling (WCW), and Dean Douglas in the World Wrestling Federation.

“Troy would come to my house in a car with three or four kids, bothering

sleeping in his car outside of the training school. “On Sunday, as soon as we were done working out, he was back on the road to go to school,” DeNucci says. “That was a five-hour drive. But when you love something, you work for it.”

DeNucci admits that he often made the young man’s apprenticeship difficult: “For three months, I put him through torture. I put a hold on him and said, ‘Find a way to get out.’ Sometimes, he did. Sometimes, he

ring, and having Foley splash onto it from the turnbuckles.

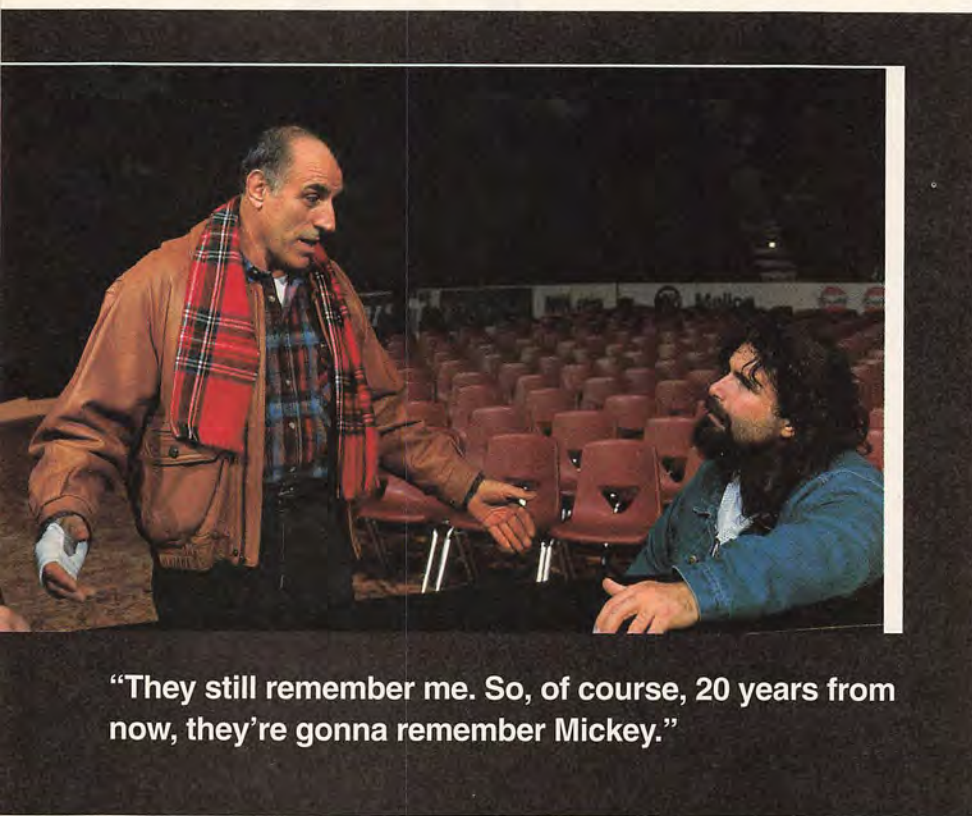
Soon, Foley and other trainees were appearing on independent shows at small high school gyms near DeNucci’s school. The purpose was developing students’ confidence in front of an audience before they graduated to larger leagues. Almost always, Mick was matched against Troy Martin in singles or tag-team matches. “They were the two best students I ever had,” DeNucci explains. “They brought out the best in each other.”

As time passed, DeNucci realized that Foley was destined for bigger things, and stood back, as Cactus Jack burst out of the pack in Japan, ECW, WCW and the World Wrestling Federation. While DeNucci felt proud of his student’s exploits—particularly his three World Wrestling Federation Heavyweight title reigns—he wasn’t always happy about the way the wrestler imperiled his body, wrapping himself in barbed wire, getting tossed onto concrete from high elevations, wrestling on rings spread with thumbtacks, and weathering immeasurable “chair shots” to the head.

“It’s a complicated thing,” DeNucci says. “People want to see this today. But Mickey’s 34-years-old, and his body looks like an old car from 1901. I remember seeing the Undertaker pick him up on top of a cage and throw him through a table. And you know what? If it was me, I wouldn’t do it. Fine you make your money. But all the money you make, you give it to the doctor.”

Still, he concedes that Foley’s matches are memorable. “Look, the real wrestling fans, they never forget,” says the man who shaped Foley. “They still remember me. So, of course, 20 years from now, they’re gonna remember Mickey.”

Then again, who wouldn’t? “I’m not just saying this because he’s my student,” DeNucci argues. “But if anybody else tried the things I see Mickey doing, I’ll tell you this, that man is gonna be dead.” ■



**“They still remember me. So, of course, 20 years from now, they’re gonna remember Mickey.”**

me, because he wanted me to train him,” DeNucci says. “And you want to know how young he was? His mama was driving.”

Foley was a student at the State University of New York/Cortland when he met DeNucci, and the veteran had one condition for training him: “I told him, ‘Mickey, if you stop going to college, you stop going to my school. If something happens to you, if you get hurt, what are you gonna do then?’ You know, I didn’t want to be responsible for ruining some kid’s life.”

Agreeing to the stipulation, Foley commuted from college every weekend,

didn’t. But he always tried.”

After awhile, Foley was enduring high back bodydrops, and propelling himself over the ropes—without making contact with the top cable—onto the arena floor. “Many times, he fell on his head,” Dominic says. “But he never complained.”

At one stage, Foley became fixated with leaping from the top rope like his idol, Superfly Jimmy Snuka. But few other students were willing to sustain the impact. “He did it to one guy,” DeNucci recalls. “He got squashed.” A solution was eventually reached by rolling up a mat in the center of the



by Aaron Williams

# circuit-training

**For Chris Benoit, taking care of himself and staying in shape are two things he is fanatical about. It's taken a lot of hard work to get this far, and he's not about to let up anytime soon.**

It's 1:00 a.m. and Chris Benoit is still 75 miles from Rochester, New York, where the World Wrestling Federation will be taping *SmackDown!* later this evening. Normally, he would be driving with his buddies Eddy Guerrero, Dean Malenko and Perry Saturn, but a variety of scheduling conflicts has forced Benoit to make this trip alone. It was only a few hours ago that he was performing in front of 20,000 screaming fans, but now he is on the road, alone, in the middle of nowhere.

The radio in the rental car has proven itself better at picking up static than music, so Benoit turns it off and turns his thoughts toward the day at hand. In about an hour or so, he should be arriving at his hotel. He'll check in and head up to his room. If he's not too tired, he'll comb through the phone book and look for a gym where he can work out later in the day. If he's too tired, he'll just go to sleep and worry about finding a gym in the morning.

Finding gyms has not been a problem for Benoit when he tours North America. It was a different story when he was wrestling in Japan or Mexico, where well-equipped fitness centers were few and far between. In those days, a weight bench and a few plates were a luxury. Most of the time, Benoit found himself doing push-ups, squats and other exercises in his hotel room in order to stay in shape. But now he's traveling to New York's third-largest city, and even though he has never been there before, he doesn't anticipate that finding a good gym will be a problem.

As he continues down the road, he notices a billboard advertising a fast-food joint and suddenly remembers he hasn't eaten in a









while. Since he prefers wrestling on an empty stomach (he won't eat three to four hours before performing), this means that he hasn't eaten in about eight hours. But Benoit won't be stopping at any fast-food place. Fast, fried and fatty foods are not part of his "bland is beautiful" diet.

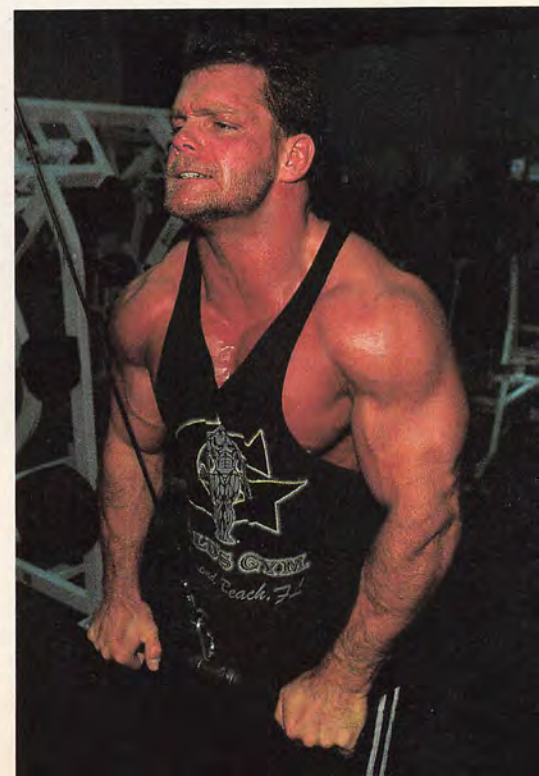
Benoit believes that 75 percent of staying fit is diet-related, so he avoids sugars, desserts and fried foods, and sticks mainly to boiled, broiled and steamed delicacies. He realizes that avoiding desserts and fried foods may not make for the most tasteful of diets, but he is willing to sacrifice his gourmet standing for the nutritional benefits of eating plenty of broiled lean meat and steamed vegetables. This means he'll be ordering off the menu 95 percent of the time, but any inconvenience is a small price to pay for

ensuring that he remains in peak physical condition.

Benoit watches what he eats, but he doesn't monitor his diet with a fine-toothed comb. He makes sure that he gets plenty of protein and carbohydrates, but tracks his intake of these nutrients by feel rather than by count. Since he's been on the road for a few days now and is feeling a bit run down, he'll load up on carbs today. He'll also make sure that he gets in at least three square meals. Life on the road puts a lot of strain on the body, and Benoit wants to make sure he maintains his weight and strength. Often, this means he'll eat more than three meals a day on extended road trips.

Besides getting his fill of steamed vegetables, Benoit will also make sure he takes 10 grams of vitamin C (in mineral form), five grams of calcium and a multi-vitamin. For Benoit,

taking these supplements is as important as eating healthy and working out in the gym. When he misses a day, he can feel it—he's not as strong or as energetic. He admits





that this might be a psychological reaction, but whether it's that or physiological, the effect is real, and not taking his supplements affects his performance in the ring.

The vitamin C has proven especially beneficial. He started taking large doses of it several years ago, and ever since, the aches and pains don't seem to last as long, colds and the flu have become things of the past, and the recovery time from serious injury has been cut down dramatically.

With the fast-food signs now in his rear-view mirror and the hunger pangs slowly ebbing, Benoit stops thinking about eating and starts thinking about working out. He tries to work out at least five days a week. He tells himself he could use a few more days off than he gives himself, but like his supplement routine, he feels down when he doesn't work out. He prefers to work out in the morning, and he would rather work out with a partner than by himself. Usually, he works out with Perry Saturn, but Saturn's not going to be around today, so he'll be working out solo.

He begins his routine with a 20-minute stretching and flexibility warm-up. Once he has loosened up, he'll begin a circuit-training routine that normally lasts around 45 minutes. Benoit learned long ago that a cardio-shaping workout was much more beneficial to his body than a strength workout, which puts a lot of wear and tear on the joints and tendons, so he'll work his circuits taking about 20-30 seconds between sets. After completing circuit training, Benoit will begin his cardio workout, which consists of 20 to 40 minutes on the Stairmaster. Once he's finished that, he'll cool down for another 20 minutes.

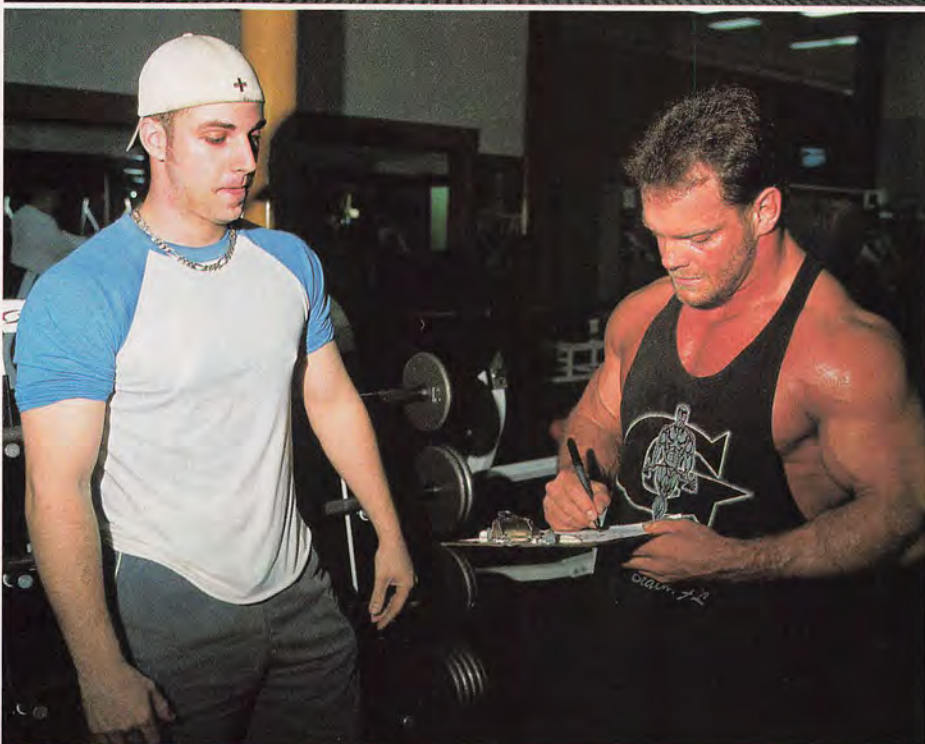
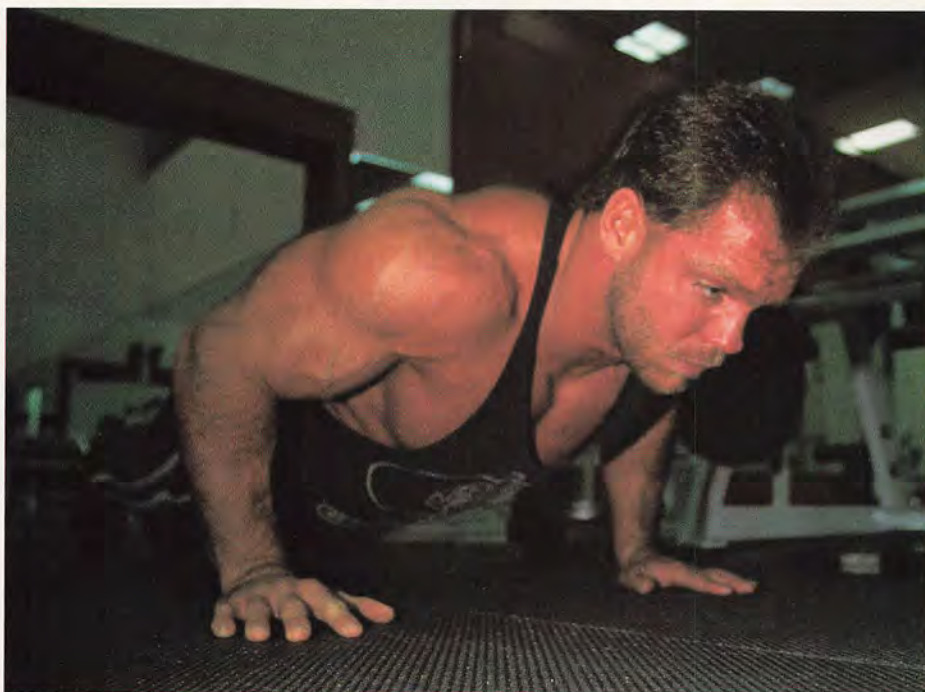
Because Benoit is so well known, he is often recognized when he goes to a gym. He'll say a few hellos and shake a few hands, but for the most

part, people are respectful and leave him alone. It's not that he's indifferent to his fans, it's just that he's so intense when he's working out that most people have the courtesy to stay away.

It's now almost 2:00 a.m., and Benoit is wondering why he's even thinking about working out at a time like this. He's tired, sore, and could use some rest. But, as he drives the

final few miles to his hotel, he reminds himself that he'll feel better tomorrow after he's worked out. For Chris Benoit, taking care of himself and staying in shape are two things he is fanatical about. It's taken a lot of hard work to get this far, and he's not about to let up anytime soon.

"It's all about persistence," he reminds himself. "It's all about persistence." ■



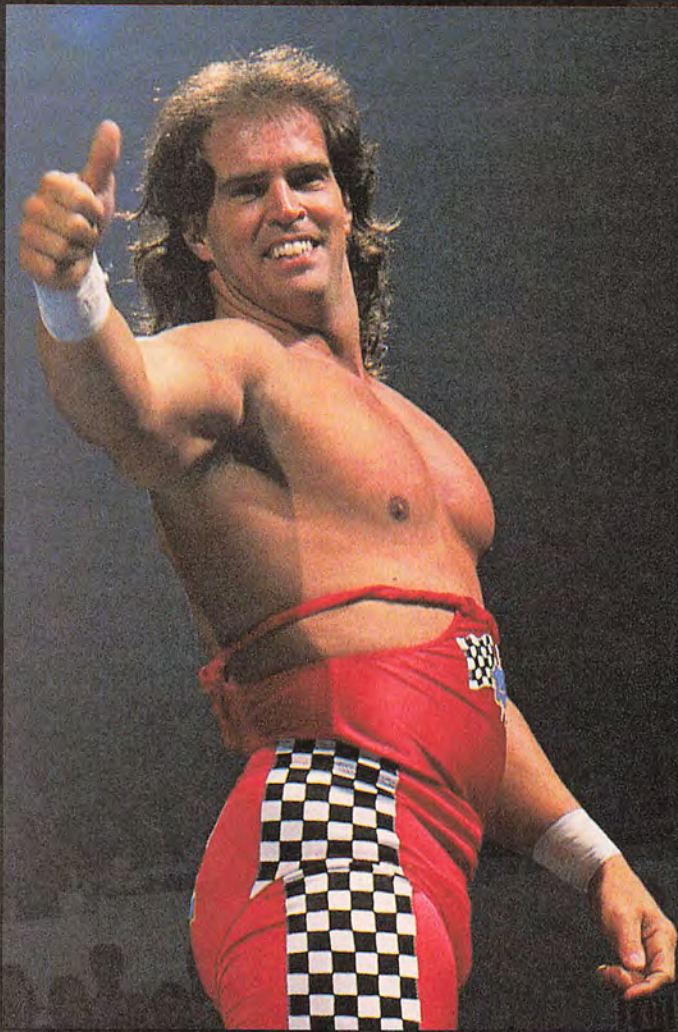


**Years of Weak Gimmicks  
Weren't Enough to Break the  
Determination and Spirit of  
Bob "Hardcore" Holly**

NOBODY'

by Phil Speer





**THURMAN "SPARKY" PLUGG** ran to the ring at the 1994 *Royal Rumble* when his number was called. Announcer Vince McMahon declared that it was an excellent opportunity for Thurman, as he had a chance to win the *Royal Rumble* in his World Wrestling Federation debut and qualify for a championship match at *WrestleMania*.

It didn't exactly work out that way. Plugg was the first in a series of terrible characters for Bob Holly. But he never gave up, and because of his tenacity, today he has been competing continuously in the Federation longer than anyone, except Billy Gunn and the Undertaker.

Why has Bob Holly been able to persevere so long when others have fallen by the wayside? And why, after all these years, has he never been a main eventer? You don't have to talk with Holly or his peers very long to figure out the answer to both questions.

"I won't kiss nobody's ass," Holly explained. "Some of these guys, they see the

agents and they run up to them. If I see them, I say 'Hi' and keep walking. I'm not going to try to carry on a conversation with them just to get myself over. If they like me, they like me. If they don't, I couldn't care less. That's the way I am."

While his no-nonsense personality has kept him out of main events, it has also kept him on the Federation roster for the last six years. That straightforward attitude augments an unbeatable work ethic. What's the secret to sticking around so long? Holly will tell you himself.

"Just do what they ask and you'll be here forever," he says. "And don't cause no problems. I ain't never caused a problem since I've been here. I don't drink. I don't do drugs. I mind

S  
**FOOL**

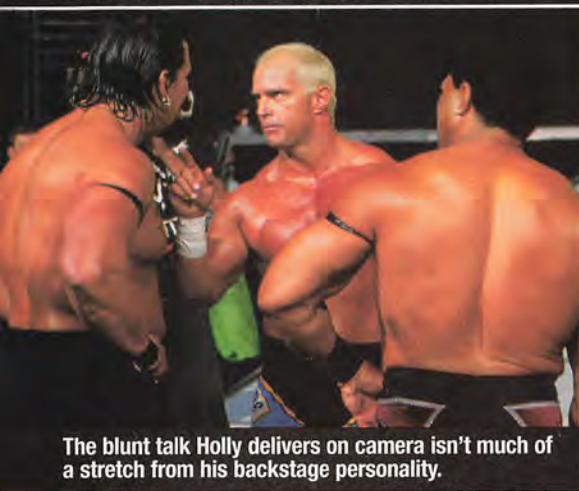




Road Dogg gets a taste of Holly's most successful gimmick to date: the ass-kicking "Hardcore Holly."



The birth of the Federation's Hardcore Division went a long way toward getting Holly over with the fans.



The blunt talk Holly delivers on camera isn't much of a stretch from his backstage personality.

my own business. I do what I'm supposed to do. A lot of these so-called athletes—it's stated in their contract to work out, and as you can see by the looks of probably about 95 percent of these guys, they're out of shape. If they get their fat asses in the gym they'd probably have a lot longer longevity here."

Bob Howard always wanted to be a wrestler. In 1986 while working as a mechanic, he learned of a Pensacola, Florida, wrestling school through a friend of a friend of a friend. The school started its own promotion, the World Organization of Wrestling, and each Saturday for two years it aired a television show. He competed as Bob Holly until the Sparky Plugg debacle, including brief stints in the Jarrett family's Memphis territory and Jim Cornette's now-defunct Smoky Mountain Wrestling.

"That's where you learn to starve," Holly says. "You sleep in your car. [In Smoky Mountain] I was driving all the way from Mobile up to North Carolina and Tennessee. And it just wasn't worth it."

Fed up, Holly quit and tried his luck in NASCAR-sanctioned stock car races. In 1993, Paul Bearer got his hands on a tape of Holly through a mutual friend. Federation officials offered him a contract, and Holly figured he made it.

Unfortunately, his call-up to the Federation came during the cartoon character era—the time of guys named Doink and Duke the Dumpster. It was also a time when wrestling wasn't in the public spotlight.

When officials learned he raced cars, Thurman "Sparky" Plugg was born. Soon Sparky was introduced to the world via televised vignettes. Looking straight into the camera while sitting behind the wheel of a racecar, he would declare, "My friends call me Sparky. You can call me Sparky, too."

Holly's gimmick was true-to-life, unlike many of the other characters of the time, but nobody believed it.

"It sucked," Holly says. "I went to Vince and I said, 'No offense, and I'm glad you hired me and everything, but that name, everybody laughs at it. It's a joke.'"

So he became Bob "Spark Plugg" Holly. Slightly less gimmicky perhaps, but he was still a racecar driver who came to the ring to cheesy engine-revving entrance music.

Bombastic Bob of the New Midnight Express came along in early 1998. Despite promises that the character would be "pushed to the moon," it faltered within weeks. He made occasional appearances on *Shotgun Saturday Night*—mostly to make other guys look good—and then disappeared completely. Bob Howard is a welder by trade, and he returned to that profession when he was left off television for extended periods of time.

Federation officials never had a good reason to release him, as he is undeniably a natural athlete—he has arguably the best dropkick in the business—and he never let his chiseled 235-pound frame deteriorate.

"He trains in the gym the way you're supposed to train," says Steve Blackman, clearly no stranger to workout facilities himself. "He doesn't just go in and go through the motions. He's in there relentlessly. He watches his diet well. So he does what he has to do to stay in shape—cardio- and muscular-wise—and go out there and do his job better."

Near the end of 1998, after nearly five years, Holly's hard work started to pay dividends. Al Snow created the J.O.B. Squad, and his real-life friend Holly was a charter member. After a fast start, the Squad was ultimately another failed gimmick. But it was absolutely essential to Holly's career, providing him with much-needed face-time on the Federation's most-watched shows and even pay-per-views.

The death of the J.O.B. Squad coincided with the birth of the Hardcore Division. Holly had a series of hardcore



# **"Sparky Plugg was a cartoon character, and I didn't know how to portray a cartoon character. As for the New Midnight Express, I wasn't comfortable with that at all."**

matches with Snow, and after one of those matches Hardcore Holly was created.

"A lot of times it's just a waiting game in this business," says Federation official Tony Garea, who has worked with Holly for his entire Federation tenure. "For the last six months or a year, he has found his place."

Holly won the Hardcore Title by defeating Snow at 1999's *St. Valentine's Day Massacre* in Memphis, Tennessee, a match that saw the two Superstars' battle ending up in the icy-cold waters

of the Mississippi River. His first reign as Hardcore Champion was brief, but he regained the title one month later at *WrestleMania XV*, an accomplishment that Holly calls the highlight of his career.

"One of my biggest goals was just to make it into a *WrestleMania* in a singles match," Holly says. "But not only that, but to win a title—that's a dream come true."

Like so many other successful personas, Holly says the Hardcore character is an extension of his own personality.

As the saying goes, it's like him with the volume turned up.

"Sparky Plugg was a cartoon character, and I didn't know how to portray a cartoon character," Holly says. "As for the New Midnight Express, I wasn't comfortable with that at all. To me you've gotta be comfortable with your character, and Hardcore Holly is a character I'm very comfortable with."

The reason, he says, is that Bob and Hardcore Holly have a lot in common. "If you sit here and say 'Well, I don't like Bob Holly,' that's fine; that's your business. I ain't gonna lose no sleep over it. That's a reflection of my personality, and that's what Hardcore Holly is."

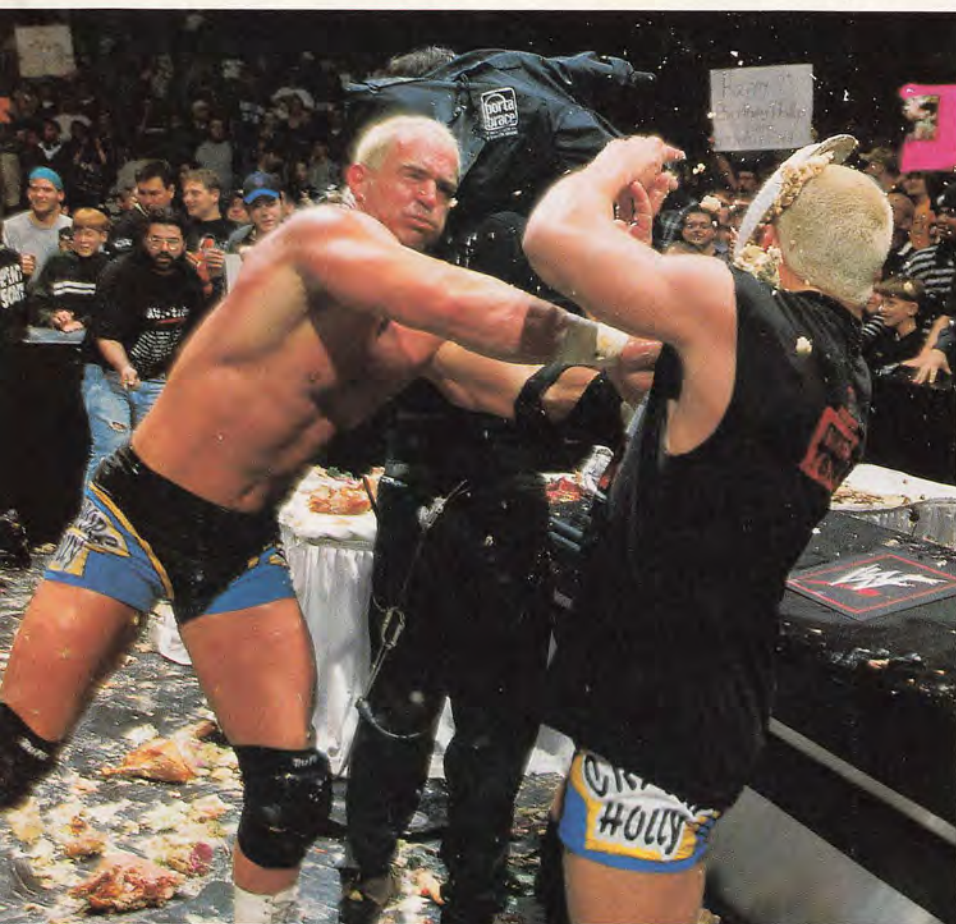
Confirms Snow, "[The character] is not much of a stretch."

If you're not yet convinced that Holly is straightforward, consider his response when asked about teaming with "cousin" Crash Holly.

"For probably the first couple months, I just hated it, hated it," Holly says, repeating himself for emphasis. "I liked being by myself; I liked doing what I was doing. But then after a while, he started growing on me, and things started working out. And I thought, 'Hey this might work.' And it does."

Still, Holly longs to return to singles competition. He was grateful for the opportunity to wrestle for the Intercontinental Championship at this year's *Royal Rumble*, and hopes to continue in that division before eventually moving on to bigger and better things.

A quick glimpse at history reveals that there are no guarantees. But whatever happens, you can never accuse Bob Holly of not waiting his turn. ■



**It took time for Holly to buy into the addition of his "cousin" Crash Holly to his storylines. But after a couple of months of hating it, Holly now enjoys the gimmick.**





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# Critically Incorrect

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by Aaron Williams

## fresh answers to tired insults

WE'VE ALL HEARD THE CRITICS: *Wrestling is for idiots. Wrestling fans are stupid.* As the anger builds inside us, we've probably responded to their comments by saying something like: *you just don't get it or who are you to tell me what I should or shouldn't watch?*

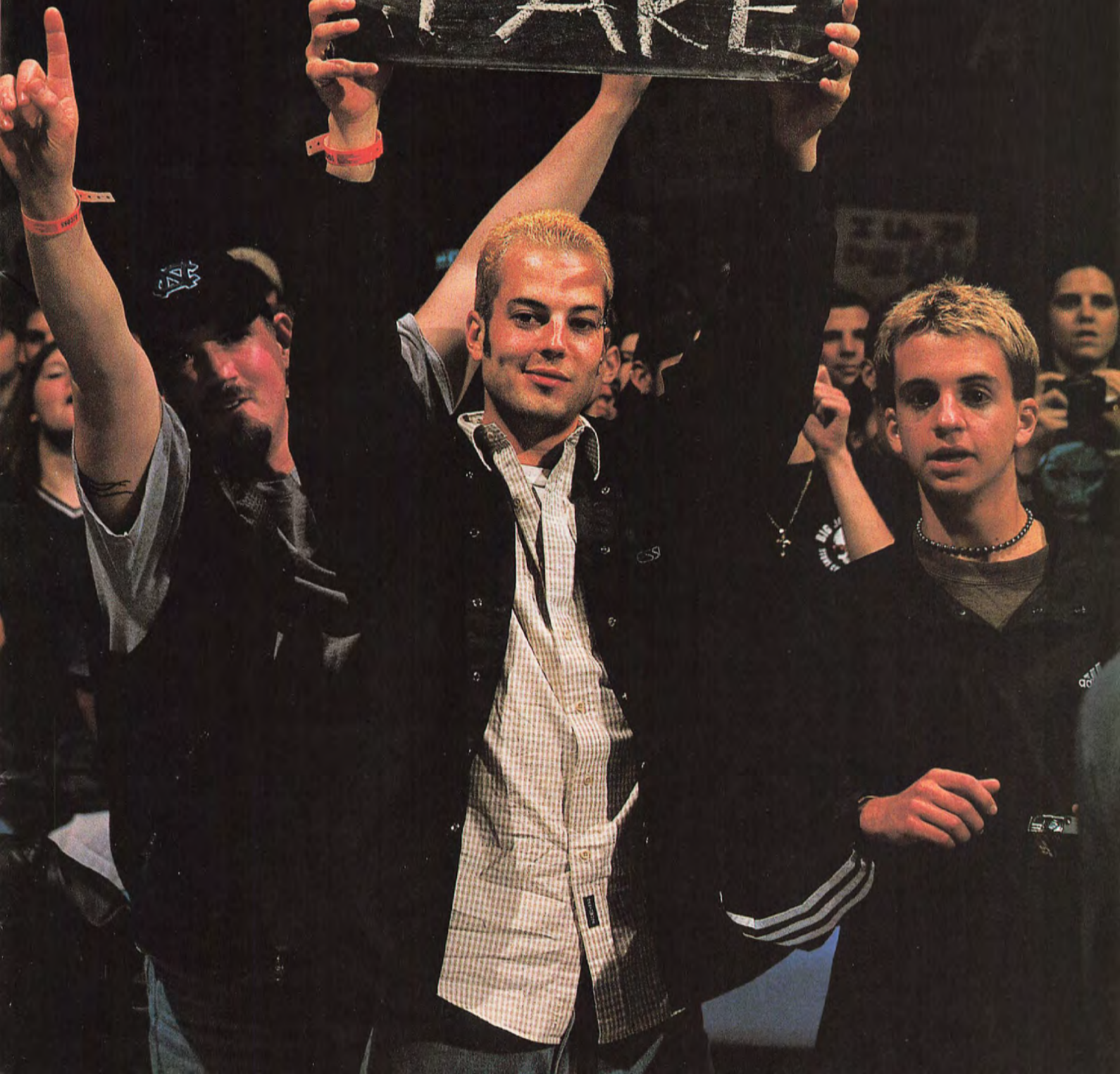
To be sure, these responses are more than valid. After all, no one is forcing anyone to watch sports-entertainment. And in a land that values freedom of expression, we are all free to choose what we want to watch as long as our actions do not infringe upon the rights of others.

The problem with our answers, however, is that they avoid—rather than refute—the critics' statements. The main reason that sports-entertainment fans are demeaned in this manner is not that the critics have a legitimate reason to utter these absurdities, but instead that these critics are

intellectually insecure. By putting down others and convincing themselves that they are our intellectual superiors, they can cover up their own shortcomings and manage to feel better about themselves.

What's amusing about the whole situation is that the critics just don't get it. They wouldn't know the difference between Crash Holly and Viscera, and probably think that a foreign object is something stamped with "Made in Japan." But because they believe themselves to have superior IQs, they think they do get it. Unless fans respond with some concrete evidence proving the baselessness of their critics' arguments, those critics are going to keep on uttering their accusations. So even though we'd probably like to piledrive them Dudley-style through a table or plant some "sweet chin music" on their jaws, we'd be better off







hitting them where it really hurts: in their fragile egos.

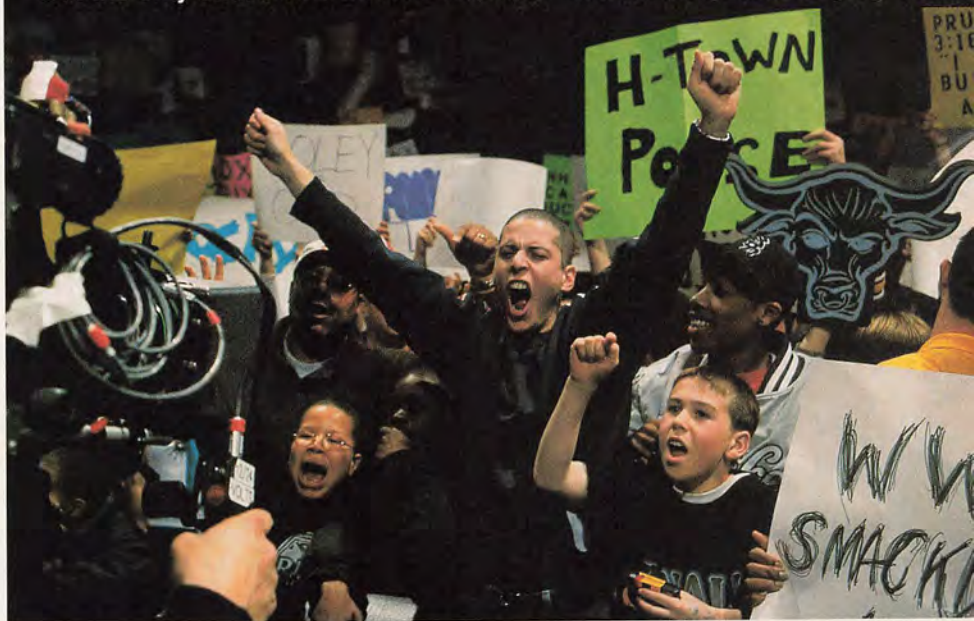
Explaining a subject as intricate as sports-entertainment to critics is not easy. As World Wrestling Federation Chairman Vince McMahon likes to point out, there is nothing like it in American culture, and different people watch for different reasons. Some enjoy the athleticism, some enjoy the humor, and some simply enjoy being an active participant in a fun and exciting community. Explaining the variety of entertainment choices that the Federation offers is a start, but it probably won't shut up the critics. The athleticism is plain to see; jokes aren't too funny when they have to be explained; and it would be impossible for the critics to imagine what it's like being a part of a crowd of 20,000 "popping" big-time for The Rock.

A better place to start might be with the concept of the "angle." Keep it simple, remember you're dealing with people who may still believe that Gilligan's trapped on that desert island. Explain that an "angle" is nothing more than a plot, a story written in the grand tradition of larger-than-life heroes and anti-heroes like Odysseus, Sherlock Holmes and Hamlet. And who spins a better tale today than the World Wrestling Federation?

Tell them about Chyna: how her travails both inside and outside the ring serve as an inspiration for women trying to make it in a man's world or for anyone trying to overcome a less-than-perfect childhood. Tell them about Steve Austin: his epic confrontation with Vince McMahon and how his eventual triumph demonstrated that with hard work and relentless determination any mountain can be climbed and any obstacle overcome. Tell



For years, the Federation's critics have droned on about violence, sexism and any number of other topics they see themselves fit to preach about. But the only critics who matter—the fans—are the ones who truly "get it."



them about The Rock: how one can be a huge Superstar and still be a good human being. Or better yet, tell them about the past. For sports-entertainment, in one form or another, has been around for over 100 years. In those years, countless stories have been told which together make up the story of America—its hopes, dreams, successes, and its failures.

At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, wrestling, along with boxing and horse racing, was one of the most popular sports in the United

States. Huge crowds packed both indoor and outdoor arenas to see the finest grapplers of the day square off in what could only be described by today's standards as long, drawn-out scientific affairs. Like boxing, wrestling was viewed primarily as a sporting event, and the athletic competition was the big draw. This would soon change, however. As America entered the 1920s, a more familiar form of wrestling would evolve, and stories about the country and its people would begin to unfold



inside the squared circle.

The 1920s saw big changes in not just wrestling, but American society as well. After the horrific experiences of World War I, the United States turned inward. A conservative and isolationist public was hungry for all-American-type heroes like Babe Ruth and Jack Dempsey. During this time, college football was very popular, and it produced the kind of clean-cut image the public was craving. Wayne "Big" Munn was one of the first big-time college football heroes to get over in the wrestling world. It didn't matter that he couldn't wrestle, fans liked his persona, and he

their frustrations. Irish neighborhoods had Irish champions, Italian neighborhoods had Italian champions, and Russian neighborhoods had Russian champions. These champions instilled a sense of pride and hope for people who were suffering through hard times.

With the onset of World War II, wrestling took a back seat to more important matters. But shortly after the end of the war, wrestling's popularity would reach unprecedented heights. Television—which was just coming of age—changed the nature of the game, making it as much entertainment as athletic compe-

tactics, long bleached-blond hair, and overt (for the time) displays of sexuality, Freddie Blassie, Buddy Rogers and other *Nature Boys* threatened the wholesome whitebread, 1950s image of the all-American lifestyle.

As the 1960s began, wrestling once again adapted to the times and told stories that were relevant to what was going on in the world. The United States and the Soviet Union were in the middle of the Cold War, and wrestling promoters responded by providing stories instilling a sense of pride in being an American. While the politicians were making points in the political arena, the

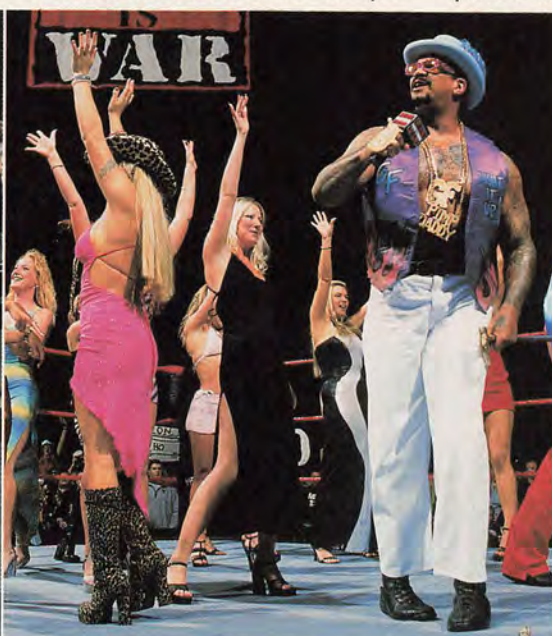
masses were making their points in and around the ring. And for the next 30 or so years, wrestling fans would cheer a host of patriotic Americans as they battled against ruthless and conniving "Soviets" and their lackeys.

Today, of course, the Soviet Union is gone, and as we enter this new millennium, a new chapter in American history is being written.

Accordingly, the World

Wrestling Federation has sought to reflect these changes and is producing stories relevant to the lives of its fans. What these stories actually mean is left for each of us to determine for ourselves. But think about it. Look at the stories. Is it any wonder that the critics are so nervous?

So next time someone insults your intelligence for being a World Wrestling Federation fan, tell them a story, and let's see who the real idiot is. ■



remained popular for a while.

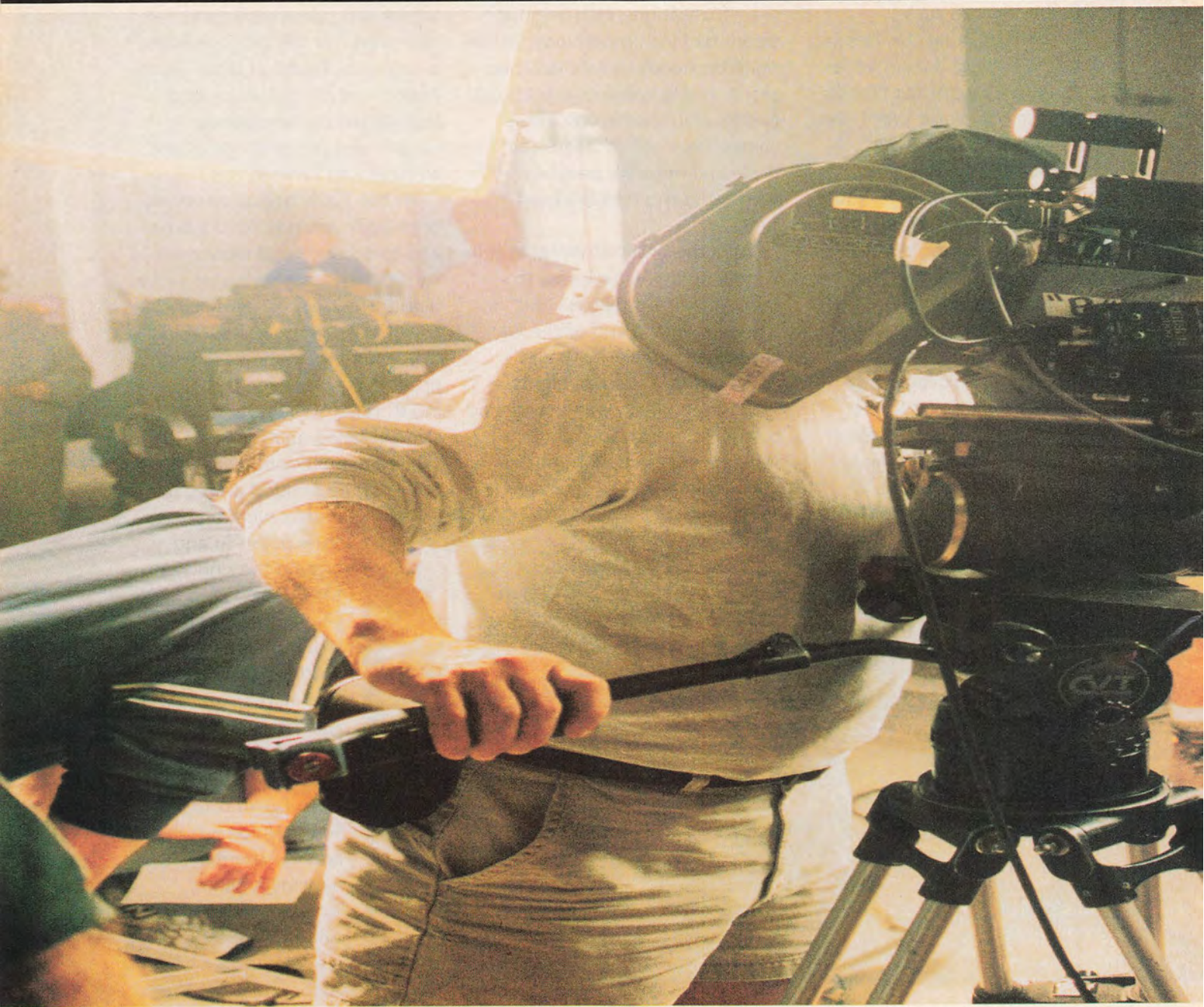
During the Great Depression of the 1930s, the all-American hero disappeared, as did much of the country's prosperity. An angrier and more sober public was in no mood to celebrate past glories when the day-to-day struggle of survival made looking forward to happier times seem an unrealistic prospect. So wrestling promoters produced ethnic heroes who could serve as rallying points for ethnic pride, as well as targets upon whom audiences could vent

tation. And America, still basking in the victories of World War II, was once again ready to embrace all-American-type heroes. The new villains were inspired by countries that had fought against the Allies, with "German" and "Japanese" wrestlers being the most hated.

Besides those villains, another type of wrestler starting to draw considerable "heel" heat during this time was the *Nature Boy*. With their arrogant attitudes, underhanded and often cowardly



by Robert J. Bledsoe



lights, camera,

cut





intitude



the game isn't the only contest during the Super Bowl—the battle for supremacy is also waged on Madison Avenue. For the second straight year, the World Wrestling Federation scored a touchdown among football fans and advertising execs with its “Attitude” commercial. And in the high-stakes *battle royal* of marketing genius, it comes as a big surprise that the Federation's representative never took a single advertising course.

Dave Sahadi, who received a Bachelor of Sciences degree in mathematics, is the man behind the Federation's Super Bowl commercials. As Promotions Director for the World Wrestling Federation, Sahadi's job includes managing a team of idea and image creators responsible for bringing to life the company's commercials and other visual output. With art and math being on opposite ends of the imaginative spectrum, even Sahadi himself couldn't envision one day being the driving force behind one of the Federation's most important creative wings.

“I was purely a math major—never took a communications course in my life,” admits Sahadi. “I graduated college and didn't know what the hell I wanted to do. Being a math major, I knew I was bored. I'm not really a numbers kind of guy.”

Despite his strictly mathematical background, Sahadi has produced results time and again. The Super Bowl commercial featuring two contestants in a beauty pageant was named one of the best commercials of January 2000 according to *AdWeek Magazine*. That's a major accomplishment in the advertising world. In addition, many casual viewers obviously enjoyed seeing the brawling beauties, as the spot was a favorite among many online voters in polls ranking the best Super Bowl commercials.

For Sahadi, it's all in a day's work.

“I like coming up with the concept from beginning to end and executing it,”

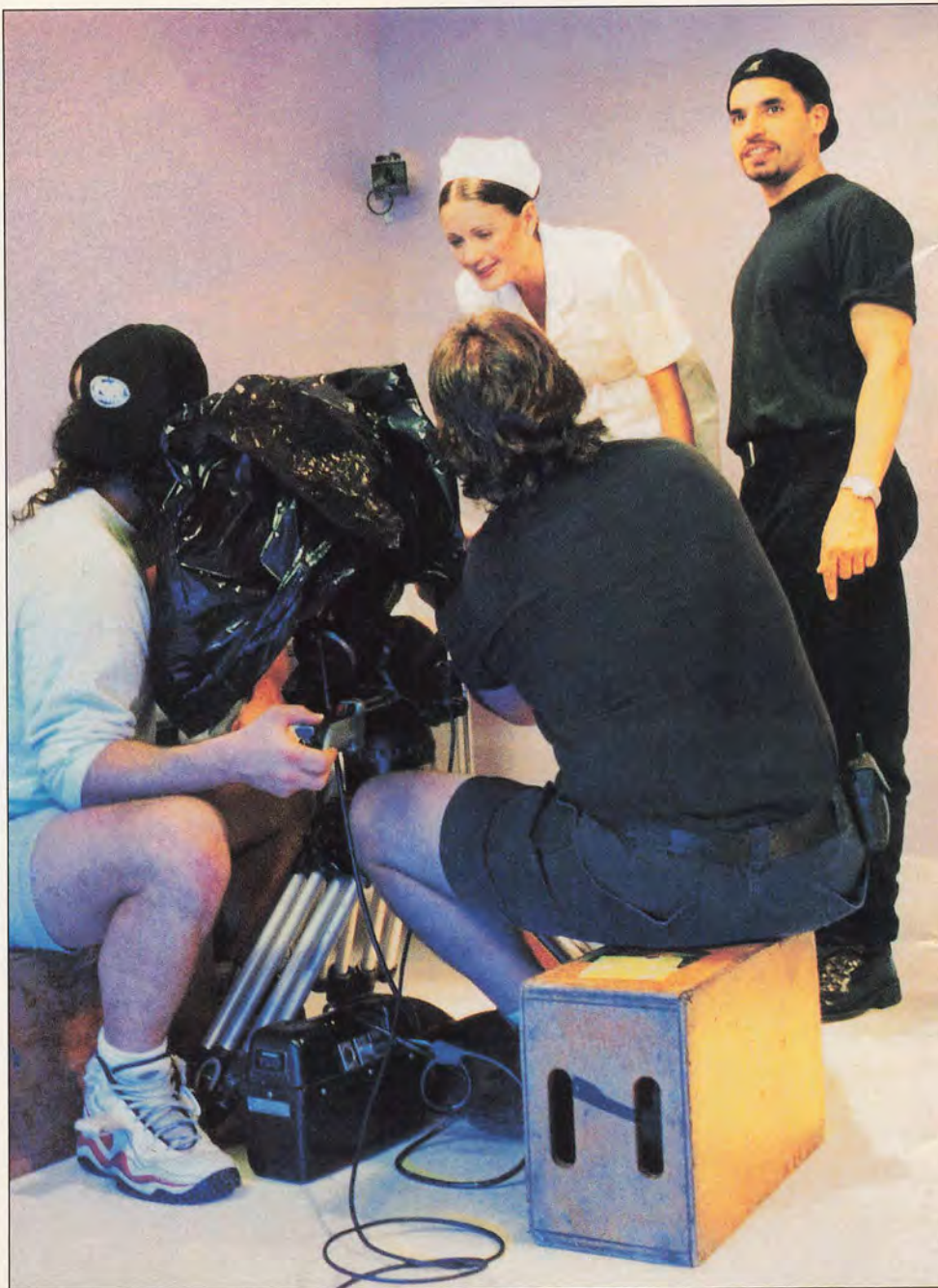
he says. “Going out there, putting together a film shoot, directing a film shoot, that's my biggest love right now. I just love being on a set, on location, and directing talent, and making my vision and my dream come to life.

“It's unique in the sense that in the real world you have a director, you have a producer, you have a guy who edits the spots, and you have creative people who write the spots,” he continues. “When I'm working on something like a Super Bowl campaign or an image spot, or a big-time pay-per-view spot, I wear all those hats.”

Wearing many hats is something

Sahadi's become accustomed to. Before his tenure in the Federation, which began nearly eight years ago, Sahadi spent time performing various duties at NBC Sports in New York. He worked his way up from a tape-logging weekend intern to a major producer at the network, responsible for such visible projects as the NBA on NBC.

What looked to be a promising future with the network quickly derailed, however. Sahadi became frustrated by what he saw as creative stifling by some of his superiors who, he alleges, were too mired in “old-school” and “whitebread” mentalities to







be open to change. He cites an example of one NBC executive who reversed an idea he'd had for an NBA campaign. Sahadi, excited about the prospects

Wrestling Federation that same year. And nearly a decade later, under World Wrestling Federation Chairman Vince McMahon, Sahadi says the difference in

**"I produced the *WrestleMania 2000* video game commercial with The Rock, the one with him in the limousine," says Sahadi. "I conceived of that spot in the gym in like 30 seconds and went down to Florida to shoot it."**

of capitalizing on pop culture, wanted to use music from the early '90s hit song *I've Got the Power*—a song that can still be heard

today during halftime at many NBA venues. Sahadi saw his zeal detoured and his chosen song replaced by the theme song from *Annie*, "The Sun Will Come Out Tomorrow."

"Here I am trying to do something that was very irreverent, innovative and groundbreaking at the time," says Sahadi, "and they just totally pulled me back. I knew then that this was a sign—this wasn't the place for me to stay for a very long time."

The rest, as they say, is history. Sahadi began work for the World

management styles is still hard to miss.

"Because I work for Vince, there's almost nothing that's taboo," says Sahadi. "It's exciting, because I can always try a new idea or try to do something differently, and Vince is going to basically support me on it. If he doesn't like something, he'll let me know. But he's not micro-managing me. He's not putting the reigns or collars on me. That's a luxury I didn't have at NBC."

But Super Bowl commercials aren't the only thing that Sahadi's winning

awards for.

"I produced the *WrestleMania 2000* video game commercial with The Rock, the one with him in the limousine," says Sahadi. "I conceived of that spot in the gym in like 30 seconds and went down to Florida to shoot it."

Not only is *WrestleMania 2000* a best-selling video game, but Sahadi's half-minute concept was voted the number-one video game commercial of January 2000 by *Inside Magazine*, beating out such heavyweights as Sony PlayStation and Sega.


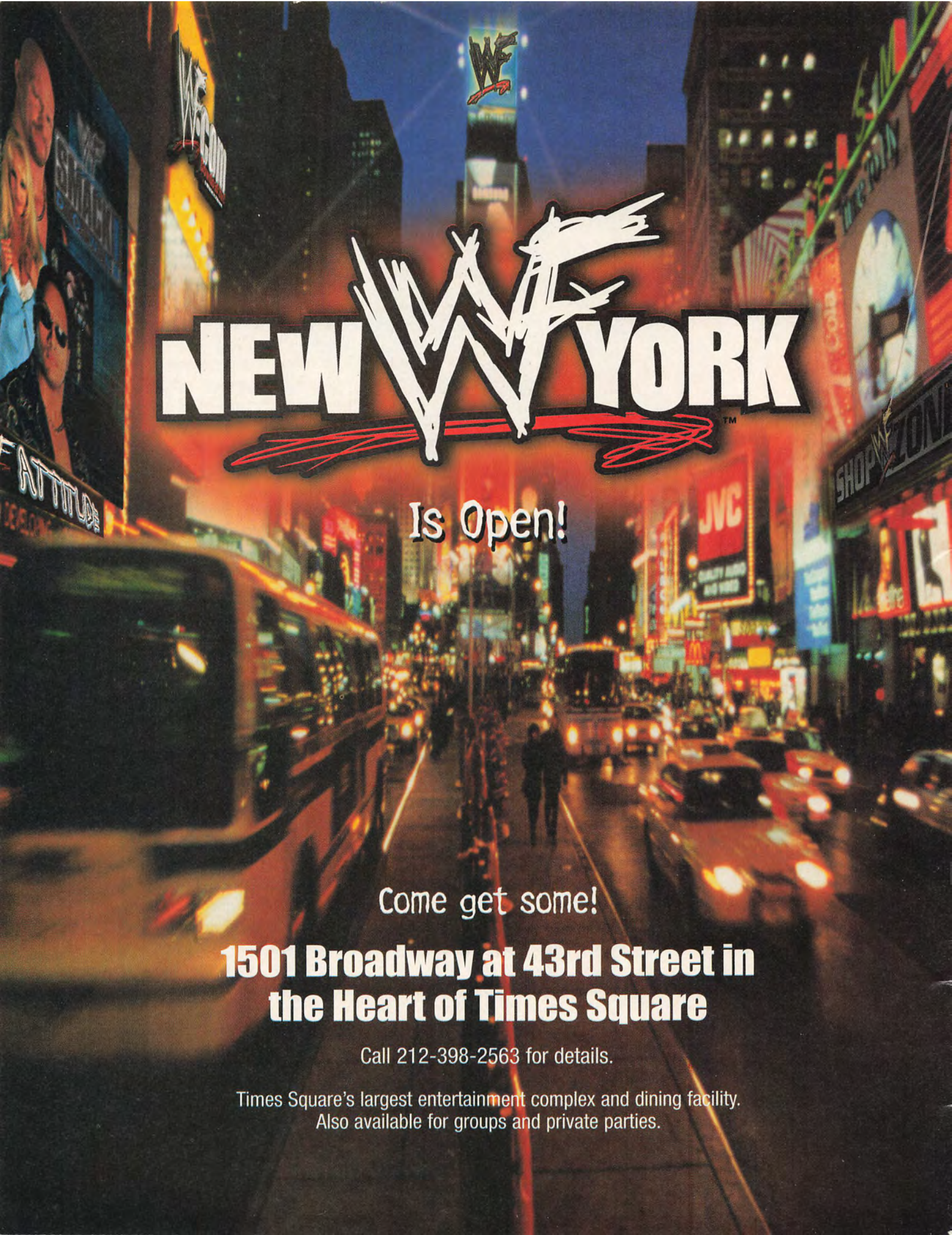
It's hard to imagine that a person who's had no formal background in advertising is in charge of video productions for an entity like the World Wrestling Federation. Furthermore, to know this same individual continues to chalk up national acclaim is even more impressive. But in the World Wrestling Federation, anything can happen. And for Sahadi, it's not about the technicalities, it's about feeling the



pulse of an audience and then delivering the corresponding emotions.

"I'm not trying to preach a message," says Sahadi. "I'm not trying to get people to love us or hate us. You can't in 30 seconds, not in that kind of environment. People aren't watching the commercials like the critics are to analyze every shot or every frame. They're just lying back with their friends and want to be entertained, to have a good time. At the World Wrestling Federation, we know how to have fun. We know how to have a good time." ■





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